

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR KATHERINE."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MRS. CANTER IS INSPIRED.

IT will be remembered that our friend Mrs. Canter took charge of the Archdeacon in his fainting fit, and, when he was sufficiently recovered, drove back to the Rectory with him. She then sent for the doctor, put the Archdeacon to bed and installed herself as his nurse, with a mental resolution to the effect that she did not leave his bedside till Miss Vera returned. As she sat watching him, she racked her brains in trying to think where the diamonds could be.

"They are not at the bank," she thought, "for Mr. Tempest told me he had sent to inquire. Lawyer Jones has not them either, for madam is too cunning to trust such a slippery fellow with them: he would make off with them before she had time to turn round, as sure as that postman Lane is the biggest fool in the country. No, they are in this house, I am certain. I felt I was burning, as the children say when they play hide-and-seek, directly I came into the house. Well, if Madam Jamieson-Tempest chooses to play that game with me I am sorry for her, for I mean to win; she has hidden; I'll seek as sure as I am a widow, and I'll find as sure as I am a laundress. I shall have plenty of time to seek, for I don't mean to leave this house till Miss Vera is in it, and I shall find plenty of opportunities when everyone else is asleep. I know the keys of every door and drawer in the house; so if the diamonds are to be found, trust me to find them."

When she reached this stage in her thoughts Mrs. Canter rose and looked at her patient, which turned their current into a new channel.

"I don't like the look of you at all, sir; that I don't. I never like to see sick people pull at the counterpane like that; it is a certain sign of death; and as for your poor heart, Mr. Tempest, it flutters like a frightened bird. If I could only find those blessed diamonds

I'd telegraph to Miss Vera to come home, that I would; and if she were to come back on the wires I don't know that she'd be here too soon. Anyhow, I'll write to her and get Captain Raleigh to post the letter. I have known her address all along as well as if I had been told; leastwise I knew if I sent the letter to Father Ambrose it would find her."

Accordingly Mrs. Canter spent the remainder of the morning, until the two captains returned, in writing to Vera; but on hearing how badly the case was going, she hesitated to send the letter on her own responsibility, until she knew the decision of the Court. But she was more determined than ever to find the diamonds when she heard that Mr. Jones's speech had done more harm to Vera than Freeman's evidence had done to Mark. Hers was not a nature to be crushed by any trouble; on the contrary, the deeper the water the better she floated. So far from feeling inclined to sink after her interview with the two captains, her buoyant spirits rose to the occasion.

Had she been a good Catholic, she would, under existing circumstances, have invoked the aid of St. Anthony, who is wont to reward his clients by finding their lost things. But Mrs. Canter was not much given to prayer of any kind; she was eminently a Martha rather than a Mary; neither was she given to ask help of anyone; least of all the saints, for she was much too thorough a Protestant to believe for one moment that they could hear her prayers. So she did not have recourse to St. Anthony. She did, however, ejaculate, as she ascended the stairs after Captain Raleigh and his friend had left; but that ejaculation was certainly not a prayer, neither was it apparent to whom it was addressed, for it was merely this: "Drat the diamonds!" drat being a favourite word of Mrs. Canter's. It expressed pretty much the same as another little word of four letters, but it had this advantage over that other word—it was not naughty; vulgar it might be, inelegant it certainly was, but it was not wicked and it was expressive.

Having thus relieved her feelings, Mrs. Canter proceeded upstairs, but instead of going on to the dressing-room where the Archdeacon lay in bed, she paused at Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's bedroom, and, opening the door, walked in and looked quickly round. Suddenly her eyes rested on a large mahogany wardrobe which had stood in the same place in the first Mrs. Tempest's time, and it was then that the inspiration above alluded to came to her.

The sight of the wardrobe recalled to Mrs. Canter's memory a scene which occurred fully fifteen years ago, when, Mr. Ryot-Tempest having invested in a rod for the correction of his son, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest persuaded Norah to get hold of it and hide it, under her direction, in a secret drawer in the wardrobe. Memory recalled to her recollection the existence of the secret drawer; suspicion suggested the diamonds were hidden somewhere; shrewdness said, by their owner; genius whispered, in the secret drawer; and the next

moment Mrs. Canter was as certain the whisper was true as if she saw the diamonds lying there. A flash of something, call it what you will—light, inspiration, intelligence : a flash revealed to her the secret of the jewels ; of this she felt convinced ; but with the revelation came a feeling of intense anger at her own stupidity in not having thought of this place before.

"Well, if anyone had told me I could have been so stupid as not to think of that drawer before, I would not have believed them ; I could not have made a bigger fool of myself if I had tried, unless I had married Lane. However, better late than never ; I may be in time yet ; I will send Mary with a message to Mr. Deedes to say I have found them."

And, acting at once upon this idea, she sent that letter to Mr. Deedes which made him change his policy. This done, she looked at the Archdeacon, told him everything was going on well, and she expected the others would soon be home from the Court ; and then she went back to Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's room to examine her wardrobe, for the drawer fastened with a spring and required no key. To her exceeding wrath, however, the wardrobe was locked, and nowhere could she find the key, though she took the liberty of searching the room very thoroughly for it.

"They are in there sure enough, I'll be bound, or why should she lock up her wardrobe ? As soon as Mr. Deedes comes in, we'll have them out ; and once they are found, I'll telegraph to Miss Vera to come home to her father before he dies," said Mrs. Canter to herself, as she took the precaution of locking the bedroom door and putting the key in her pocket, to prevent Mrs. Ryot-Tempest from entering the room until Mr. Deedes had done so.

In due time Mrs. Ryot-Tempest and Holmes returned from the Court, arriving before any of the others ; for Mr. Deedes had several matters to attend to before he could get away, and the two gentlemen preferred walking to driving with their hostess. Mary met her mistress in the hall by Mrs. Canter's orders, most willingly obeyed, and said the doctor had given strict orders that the house was to be kept perfectly quiet, and the Archdeacon on no account to see anyone that day but Mrs. Canter, as if he had another fainting fit—and the least excitement might produce one—the doctor would not answer for the consequences.

"Where is your master ?" demanded Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"In bed in his dressing-room, ma'am."

"Very well. I shall go and lie down on the sofa in my room, Holmes. Bring me some tea as quickly as you can."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," interrupted Mary ; "but would you mind going into Miss Vera's sitting-room ? Your room is locked."

"My room locked ! By whom, pray ?" demanded Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in an anxious tone.

"By Mrs. Canter, ma'am. She has the key."

"Indeed! Well, I have met with many impertinent things in the course of my life, but never with anything to equal this," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, in a suppressed rage.

She reached the landing white with anger, meaning to rattle the handle of her door till Mrs. Canter came and unlocked it; but in this she was disappointed; for in front of the door stood Mrs. Canter, vested in a large white muslin apron of Mary's, the bib of which covered but a very small portion of her mighty chest; her large, soft, crinkled red hands were folded in front of her, resting where her waist ought to have been, but she scorned anything so feminine as a waist; an imposing cap crowned her black hair; a triumphant smile played about her lips; an unusually suave manner warned Mrs. Ryot-Tempest that the battle was to be fierce between them.

"Unlock that door this moment, you insolent woman, or I will have you removed by main force," she said, in a low, clear, distinct voice, which nevertheless betrayed the intense anger she was feeling.

"No, ma'am, you won't do anything of the kind; for there is not a servant in the house who would venture to lay so much as his little finger on me; and I don't mean to open the door till Mr. Deedes comes."

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest paused to consider her next move. Clearly to attempt to displace this gigantic woman would be as undignified as it would be hopeless. Mrs. Canter was stronger than most men; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, though as tall as her adversary, was slight and possessed of no great physical strength. A personal encounter was therefore out of the question; it was equally certain none of the servants would venture to attempt to remove her. So physical force could not be employed. And as for Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's impressive manner, which would have cowed a less brave spirit, it had simply no effect on Mrs. Canter beyond adding to her intense enjoyment of the scene.

But Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was also a woman of resources. There yet remained another weapon: she would threaten to disturb the Archdeacon; that threat would no doubt prevail.

"Unless you unlock that door this moment, I shall be obliged to disturb the Archdeacon, and request him, ill as he is, to interfere," she said.

"That will bring her to her senses," she thought. But not a bit of it; Mrs. Canter had foreseen this move and was quite prepared to meet it.

"No, ma'am, you won't go near the master if I know it. Mr. Tempest's life depends on his being kept perfectly quiet; to disturb him would be murder; and if you attempt to do it, I'll stop you, if I have to carry you downstairs," said Mrs. Canter, forgetting her stops as even she had never done before.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest saw she was in earnest, and believing her to be quite capable of carrying out her threat she resolved to beat a retreat ; but curiosity prompted her before leaving the field to demand some explanation of this extraordinary conduct.

"You must be mad ; and as I have no desire to come in contact with a maniac, my only course is to humour your freak," she said with dignity.

"There is method in my madness, at any rate," interrupted Mrs. Canter.

"What has possessed you to do this ? No sane person would act in such a manner."

"Indeed ! Well, I am sane enough to know the diamonds are in that room, and wise enough to prevent you from going in until Mr. Deedes has seen them."

And if Mrs. Canter had wanted anything to confirm her suspicion, the look of utter defeat on Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's face as she turned and went into an adjoining room was enough.

"What was all that talking outside my room, Norah ?" asked the Archdeacon when Mrs. Canter resumed her character of nurse, after this pleasing little interlude, during which she had played the part of a special constable.

"It was Mrs. Ryot-Tempest inquiring for you, sir," said Mrs. Canter, who was of opinion that nurses should not stick at the truth, if the truth were likely to be detrimental to their patients.

"Don't let her in, Norah ; please don't let her in. Stay with me," said the Archdeacon feebly ; and the request and the tone in which it was made told plainly enough how great was his dread of this woman whom he had made his wife.

"No fear, sir," said Mrs. Canter, pitying her master from the bottom of her large heart ; for though in his health she had despised him for making this second marriage, his present helplessness appealed to her womanly sympathy, and she pitied far more than she blamed him.

Just then there was a tap at the door, and when she opened it Mary whispered to her that Mr. Deedes had come, and wanted to see her immediately, and that Reuben was in the kitchen.

"Send Reuben up here and tell Mr. Deedes I'll be with him directly," said Mrs. Canter, and then returning to the Archdeacon she said :

"I must leave you for a little while, sir, to speak to Mr. Deedes."

"See that no one comes in, then, Norah. Be very careful I am not disturbed, and be as quick as you can."

"I'll take care of that, sir. Try and get a nap while I am gone ; sleep will do you more good than anything."

On leaving the room, Mrs. Canter found Reuben outside, wondering greatly what he was wanted for. He was soon enlightened.

"Reuben, the master is in there, about as strong as a new-born babe ; stand by the door till I come back and don't let anyone in ; least of all madam, for it is as much as his life is worth ; if he rings, call me. I have found the diamonds !" And without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Canter ran downstairs, while Reuben nodded silently and took up a position with his back to the door like a sentinel on duty.

In the Archdeacon's study, which Mrs. Canter now entered, were the lawyer and the two captains eagerly awaiting her arrival.

"Well, Mrs. Canter, and where are the diamonds ?" said Mr. Deedes as she entered.

"In Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's wardrobe, sir."

"Have you them safely ?"

"They are safe enough, because they are locked up, sir ; we must either force the lock or get the key from madam, who has it."

"But if they are locked up how can you have seen them ?" struck in Captain Tempest.

"I have not seen them, sir," said Mrs. Canter, placidly.

"Then after all you are not certain they are there ?" said Mr. Deedes in a tone of great annoyance.

"I am as certain as I am a living woman ; but I hope, gentlemen, you won't waste my time talking, for I can't be in two places at once and I can't leave the Archdeacon for long," said Mrs. Canter in a tone of reproof.

"Well, we had better ask Mrs. Ryot-Tempest for the key," said Mr. Deedes, who knew Mrs. Canter was not a person to be trifled with ; and though by no means sure she had found the diamonds, he was too anxious to recover them to leave a stone unturned to find them.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was in Vera's sitting-room when Mr. Deedes begged an audience ; she had had time to recover from her recent defeat and had gathered together her forces and decided on a new plan of action, so Mr. Deedes found his errand much easier than he had anticipated.

"I know what you have come for : that insolent woman has told you some cock-and-bull story about my diamonds, and you want to search my room for them," she said, without any sign of annoyance.

Mr. Deedes bowed gravely, for he hated the woman and scarcely knew how to be civil to her.

"I have not the slightest objection ; on the contrary, as I am naturally more anxious than anyone else that the diamonds should be found, I will do all in my power to help you ; but I must tell you I have searched every nook and corner in my room over and over again unsuccessfully," continued Mrs. Ryot-Tempest amiably.

"What an arrant humbug she is," thought Mr. Deedes as he followed her to her room, at the door of which stood Mrs. Canter.

"Is it necessary that this woman should be present?" asked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"You won't find the diamonds without me, Mr. Deedes, so I warn you," interrupted Mrs. Canter in a stage aside, overheard by Reuben from his post as sentinel.

It was characteristic of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who could not fail to see the blacksmith as she passed close by him, and indeed knew perfectly well why he was standing outside the Archdeacon's room, that she took not the slightest notice of him, acting on the principle that "what can't be cured must be endured."

"I must have some witness; Mrs. Canter will do as well as anyone else," said Mr. Deedes; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest made no further objection.

The search now began by Mrs. Ryot-Tempest opening all the drawers in her toilet-table, much to Mrs. Canter's annoyance, for she knew perfectly well the diamonds were not there and she was anxious to get back to her patient as soon as possible. She was nevertheless obliged to control her impatience while Mrs. Ryot-Tempest slowly and deliberately opened every drawer and turned it out for Mr. Deedes to inspect; common courtesy forcing him to submit, though he was as excited and impatient as Mrs. Canter.

At last the toilet-table drawers were finished and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest now turned to her dressing-case; whereupon Mrs. Canter could not resist saying: "The diamonds are not there, madam; they are in your wardrobe."

"We will look there next, please," said Mr. Deedes.

"As you will; it is a perfect farce searching this room at all," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, opening first one wing and then the other of the wardrobe.

The wings were hanging cupboards, and most unlikely places to hide the diamonds in, and needless to say they were not found there. The centre of the wardrobe contained five long drawers and two short ones; the two short ones were at the top, but Mrs. Ryot-Tempest chose to begin at the bottom and work her way up, leaving the very drawer Mrs. Canter wanted her to open first to the last. Six drawers were opened and examined without any sign of the diamonds, a process which lasted nearly half an hour; and Mrs. Canter, between her excitement about the diamonds and her anxiety about the Archdeacon, grew so hot that she stood alternately wiping her face and fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief. Mr. Deedes began to get cross, and thought Mrs. Canter was making a grievous mistake; and when, at last, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest opened the left-hand drawer, he said sharply:

"Now, Mrs. Canter, if the diamonds are not here, you will have to answer for all the trouble you have given us."

The diamonds were not there, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was about to close this last drawer with an air of triumph, when Mrs. Canter

stepped forward and laid her large red hand on the open drawer. "Excuse me, ma'am. Mr. Deedes, be so kind as to look here, please; you see these two drawers don't fill up the whole width of the wardrobe, there is a space of three or four inches between them."

"I see," said Mr. Deedes.

"There is a secret drawer between," continued Mrs. Canter.

"Nonsense, woman! I must have found it out if there had been," said Mrs. Tempest, endeavouring to close the drawer.

"You have found it out, ma'am; to some purpose too—the diamonds are in that secret chamber; if you'll have the kindness to move, I'll open it," said Mrs. Canter.

"Insolent creature!" muttered Mrs. Ryot-Tempest as she moved aside.

Mrs. Canter now put her hand into the drawer, touched a spring, which sent a sliding-board at the right side of the drawer up into the cornice of the wardrobe and disclosed a small partition, in which, pillowed on cotton-wool, lay the glittering diamonds blazing with light.

"I knew they were there—trumpery things! Now what do you think of that, Mr. Deedes? I only wish I had the punishing of you, ma'am; but Heaven will take you in hand one of these fine days, and I hope you'll get your deserts," said Mrs. Canter as she threw the scintillating diamonds in a heap on the bed, and then left the room before Mr. Deedes had found words in which to express his delight.

"Impertinent woman! but I must forgive her for finding my precious diamonds again. I am delighted! How could they have got there?" exclaimed the owner of the diamonds.

"Madam, I would rather not reply to that question," said Mr. Deedes, coldly.

"Of course," continued Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in a conciliatory tone, "this completely exonerates dear Vera from all suspicion; but the mystery is still unexplained. Stay! I have it. I wonder it did not occur to me before. The Archdeacon must have hid them here and in his dear absent way forgot all about it. No doubt he hid them when I refused to send them to the bank. Poor dear man, no wonder he forgot when Vera so foolishly ran away from home. However, we must have her back at once. Let us go down to her uncle and Captain Raleigh and tell them the good news, Mr. Deedes."

Mr. Deedes was amazed at her calmness, and the clever way in which she managed to escape so gracefully from such an exceedingly unpleasant position. That she and no one else had hidden the diamonds he was as certain as Mrs. Canter herself, and she knew this as well as he did. Yet she stood there smiling and apparently as innocent as Vera herself.

"The woman has missed her vocation; she is a born actress," he thought as he silently followed her downstairs, with a case in which she had placed the diamonds in her hands.

She led the way to the study, where Arthur Raleigh and Captain Tempest were awaiting the result of the search in the greatest impatience.

"Such good news for you both! My beautiful diamonds are found! Look, here they are! They were in a secret drawer known to no one in the house but the Archdeacon and Mrs. Canter. Poor dear Archdeacon! he is so ill we must forgive him for all the anxiety his absence of mind has caused us," exclaimed Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in her sweetest tones, as she advanced to the two gentlemen.

"The Archdeacon? What had the Archdeacon to do with it?" interrupted Captain Tempest.

"Why he is the culprit who hid them, of course. No wonder he forgot where, in all the trouble we have been through since the night of the burglary," replied Mrs. Ryot-Tempest sweetly.

"Whew—w—w," whistled Captain Tempest, sotto voce, raising his eyebrows at Raleigh.

"Mr. Deedes, you had better take charge of these tiresome jewels, which have caused so much trouble to us all, and I must go and write to dear Vera and apologise for having ever suspected her. And Captain Raleigh, I hope for the sake of 'auld lang syne' you will forgive me too, and ask Vera to do the same," she added in an undertone to Raleigh as she looked into his eyes.

"Madam, I have nothing to forgive; and Vera will, I am sure, act rightly without any advice from me," replied Captain Raleigh haughtily; and the glance of cool contempt in his blue eyes told Mrs. Ryot-Tempest her influence over him had long ago passed away.

She turned a shade paler and bit her lip with vexation, for she knew neither Raleigh nor Captain Tempest any more believed that the Archdeacon had hidden the diamonds than Mrs. Canter did; but her best policy was to appear ignorant of this fact.

"Mr. Deedes, this has quite convinced me that I have been terribly deceived in Mark Brown; I feel certain now he was in league with Freeman, and but for my dear husband's foresight in hiding the diamonds I should probably never have seen them again after that Tuesday night."

"I am glad to hear it, madam; you had better communicate with your solicitor, who happens also to be the prisoner's, to that effect before the case is resumed next Tuesday," said Mr. Deedes, stiffly; but in his heart he was secretly admiring Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's cleverness exceedingly.

She was undoubtedly a clever woman. Not the least bit intellectual, but clever with that cleverness which is much more useful to a woman than intellect. She had by her jealousy placed herself in a most awkward position; ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have failed to extricate themselves from such a dilemma, but she escaped most gracefully with a smiling countenance.

"I will go and write to Mr. Jones and to Vera, then," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, swimming in her own peculiar way to the door, where she met Mrs. Canter.

"There is no use in writing to Miss Vera: I have telegraphed to her to come home at once; but she won't be here in time to see her poor father—care has killed him!" said Mrs. Canter, who had arrived in time to hear this last remark.

CHAPTER XXXV.

JOY THAT KILLS.

MRS. CANTER was a firm believer in the destructive powers of care; so when she returned to the Archdeacon after the discovery of the diamonds, and found he refused to be kept in ignorance of what was going on but insisted that his brother should go and tell him all about the trial, she went into the study and thus delivered herself:

"Well, gentlemen, I don't know what is to be done, I am sure, Mr. Tempest will know what has happened, so I suppose he must be told; and it will kill him as sure as I am a living woman: 'care killed the cat,' and he has had care enough to kill him already; when he hears where those diamonds are found it will be the death of him. All I know is, I won't be the bearer of the news; and the doctor said no one else was to see him."

"I will tell him; the doctor cannot mean to exclude me from my husband's room," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"If he didn't, the master does; he has told me on no account to let you go into his room, ma'am, and I don't mean to either," interrupted Mrs. Canter.

"Poor dear Archdeacon, how ill he is! Well, sick people often refuse to see the person they love best, so I must give in to him, though I should like to have been the bearer of the good news. I hope it won't do him any harm, but it will be such joy to know the diamonds are found, and 'it is joy that kills,'" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

Mrs. Canter gave an indignant snort, and muttered audibly: "Joy indeed! precious little joy he has had lately or is likely to have," and then she turned to Captain Tempest and said:

"He wishes to see you, sir, and declares he will get up and come downstairs if you don't go to him."

"Then in that case I had better go at once, and tell him as little as I can. Eh, Raleigh?" said Captain Tempest.

"Yes; I imagine to excite himself as he appears to be doing is the very worst thing for him. Perhaps when he hears we have telegraphed for Vera to come home that will calm him," said Raleigh, who naturally thought Vera a panacea for every ill.

"I'll do my best; but if he has made up his mind to hear everything, he'll hear it," said Captain Tempest as he left the study.

He was shocked to see how frail and fragile the Archdeacon looked when he entered his room ; a puff of wind would soon blow out the little life there is in him, and as for the news he had to tell him, why it would come upon him like a hurricane, he thought, as he took a seat by his brother's side. "Ryot, I am afraid you are not strong enough for much talking ; won't you try and sleep ? and then when you wake you will be better able to hear the news."

"Is it bad news, then ?" exclaimed the Archdeacon anxiously.

"On the contrary, it is good news ; but I doubt the wisdom of telling you what it is in your present state," replied the Captain.

"I wish to hear it ; I am dying, George, and I have no wish to live ; but before I go I should like to know if there is a chance of Vera being cleared from this foul suspicion."

"There is every chance of that : the case is remanded for a week, and Deedes feels confident the diamonds will be found before then ; so confident that we have telegraphed for Vera to come home," said Captain Tempest, trying to break the news gently to his brother.

"She shall not do so then. Do you hear me, George ? Let another telegram go to say I forbid it. She shall never enter England again until all the world knows she is innocent," said the Archdeacon in broken sentences, for the excitement with which he spoke gave him violent palpitation of the heart.

"Ryot, my dear fellow, calm yourself ; I promise you Vera shall not enter England till the diamonds are found ; on my word of honour she shall not," said Captain Tempest, laying his hand on his brother's heart, and fearing each double-knock it gave would be the last.

Perhaps something in Captain Tempest's tone revealed the fact that the diamonds were already found ; perhaps that clearness of vision which often comes to those on the brink of the grave enabled him to guess the truth ; at any rate he guessed it. "They are found," he exclaimed, raising himself in the bed.

"Ryot ! this is simply suicidal ; lie still, or I will not speak another word to you. Yes, thank God, the confounded things are found. And now, for goodness' sake lie still and calm yourself ; your heart can't beat regularly when you are so excited ; you don't give the poor thing a chance of righting itself," said Captain Tempest as he placed the Archdeacon back on his pillows.

For a few minutes the Archdeacon had such difficulty in breathing that he could not attempt to speak, but he had no sooner recovered his breath than he demanded :

"Where ?"

"Norah found them, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who is now quite convinced of Vera's innocence and is writing to apologise to her, thinks you must have hidden them and forgotten you had done so," said Captain Tempest, hoping the Archdeacon would ask no further questions ; for, he thought, to hear of his wife's treachery, unless he suspected it, would be the last straw.

"I hid them? I did not. I thought Freeman stole them," gasped the sick man.

"My dear brother, if you will take my advice you will ask no more questions about the diamonds; they were not stolen; I wish with all my heart they had been. They are found; all England will, I suppose, know where next Tuesday; and it would be very much better for everyone if Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's theory, that you hid them lest they should be stolen and then forgot you had done so, were accepted. I have told you all there is to tell now, so try and go to sleep and let me send Norah to you."

But if Captain Tempest hoped by this means to prevent his brother from asking any more questions he was mistaken; a terrible suspicion that the woman he had made his wife had hidden the diamonds in order to cast suspicion on Vera seized hold of him; and though he dreaded lest that suspicion should be confirmed, still he felt compelled to know the truth even if the truth killed him.

"Tell me the truth, George, the whole truth. Where were the diamonds found?" he asked, laying one of his thin hands on his brother's and gazing anxiously into his face.

Captain Tempest felt in despair; he dared not refuse to answer lest the Archdeacon should again attempt to rise, and he feared the effect the truth would have upon him. Nevertheless, he thought it would excite him less to answer than to refuse to do so, and there was the chance he might not suspect his wife had hidden them. So he answered:

"In the secret drawer in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's wardrobe."

A sigh, a gasp, and the Archdeacon's hand dropped lifeless on to the bed, his eyes closed, his breathing apparently ceased, and when Captain Tempest, after ringing the bell violently, placed his hand on his heart he could detect no movement. In less than a minute Mrs. Canter entered the room, followed closely by Captain Raleigh and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, for the violence with which the bell had been pulled alarmed the whole house. Mr. Deedes came to the door, and the frightened servants crowded noiselessly on the landing.

"He is gone, Norah, I believe," whispered Captain Tempest.

"No wonder; care has killed him. Send for the doctor, sir, and order two mustard plasters," said Mrs. Canter as she moved a hot bottle which was in the bed to the Archdeacon's feet, and then gently rubbed his heart with brandy-and-water to stimulate its action.

"Poor dear Ryot! joy has killed him," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, bending over her husband to kiss him from the opposite side of the bed.

"No, ma'am, he is not dead yet. I hope you won't die of joy in this room, though, because there would not be a chance for the Archdeacon if he revives then," said Mrs. Canter with almost brutal sarcasm as she placed one of the mustard plasters, now brought by Mary, on to the Archdeacon's left side.

"Is there any hope, do you think?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, turning to her brother-in-law and ignoring Mrs. Canter entirely.

"Very little, I fear; he fell back when he heard where the diamonds were found," replied Captain Tempest.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest turned pale, her lip quivered, a sob rose in her chest, tears gathered in her eyes, and Captain Tempest almost pitied her, for he knew she was suffering, and he could not bear to see a woman suffer, even though she deserved to. But the tears were forced back, the quivering lip was bitten, the sob was turned into a cough; and whispering:

"Poor Archdeacon! Self-reproach at his forgetfulness, no doubt," she left the bed-side.

"What an actress she would have made," thought Captain Tempest, and his pity was changed to admiration, for which he inwardly scorned himself at the same time that he paid her this tribute.

"He is reviving; leave him with me and Captain Tempest till the doctor comes, if you please, ma'am," said Mrs. Canter in a loud whisper; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, fearing that her presence might have a bad effect on the Archdeacon if she remained when he recovered consciousness, swept gracefully from the room.

"You can go back to your work; your master is recovering from a fainting fit," she said to the servants on the stairs as she passed them to go to her own room.

She was not all bad, this graceful, handsome, selfish woman of the world. Like most people, she was a mixture of good and bad, for good and bad in ever varying proportions are component parts of the human race. She had her good points: she really loved her husband in her way; that is, she loved herself infinitely better; but still she did love him and she was afraid he was very ill; she did not believe he was dying, but she thought him ill enough to make her feel very anxious. She would have liked to have been able to go to him whenever she felt inclined to do so. To nurse him was far from her thoughts; her own health could not stand that; and to get up at night would have been folly; broken rest works such terrible havoc on a woman's face—its wages are wrinkles and heavy eyelids; what man is worth such a sacrifice? The Archdeacon certainly was not. But she would have liked to go into his room now and then if his anger with her had not rendered this impossible, not to mention the presence of that most objectionable, insolent woman, Mrs. Canter.

She had behaved treacherously to Vera; there was no denying it. A fit of jealousy had led her on, abetted by circumstances, from one thing to another till she was really horrified to find how far astray she had been led. Her treachery had been utterly useless also, for Captain Raleigh evidently had no eyes for anyone but Vera. It had failed signally to sow discord between these two lovers. On the other hand it had almost, if not quite, killed the Archdeacon, and it had

made her obnoxious to everyone in the house ; for she knew that, in spite of her fine acting, everyone believed she had hidden the diamonds.

And as she sat down in the privacy of her own room to ponder over all that had happened, she confessed to herself she had made a mistake in hiding the diamonds. She was sorry, exceedingly sorry she had done so, and yet she could hardly be said to be penitent, for real penitence consists in resolving to sin no more ; whereas if by hiding the diamonds she could separate Vera and Captain Raleigh she would do it again. Her sorrow was because she had failed to accomplish her object, and had made herself unpopular and lost her husband's affection for nothing. Not even to herself would she acknowledge that her conduct had had any bad effect on the Archdeacon's health. Vera's obstinacy in persisting to marry Captain Raleigh, her foolishness in running away from home and the consequent anxiety she had caused her father, were, in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's opinion, the real causes of his illness, and if he died she would attribute his death, inwardly to Vera's conduct and outwardly to the joy which kills.

While Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was thus blaming Vera for her own misdeeds, Vera : who had just received the telegram telling her the diamonds were found and that her father was seriously ill and wished her to come home at once : Vera was reproaching herself most bitterly for having left him. She had been selfish and self-willed to run away from her home, for now that she was no longer suspected it was easy enough to look back and think. The reasons which had driven her to take refuge at Avranches were not sufficient to justify her in taking such a step ; and so she blamed herself even more than her step-mother blamed her.

It was found impossible to catch the Southampton steamer that night ; so a reply was sent to say Father Ambrose and Vera would cross the following night, Wednesday, and would reach Woodford early on Thursday afternoon.

The Archdeacon had recovered consciousness when this message came, and as he was now all impatience to see Vera, the doctor informed him she could not arrive till Thursday.

"Shall I live till then ? I want to live till then ; I want to see her again before I die ; my pretty Vera—my dear wife's child."

He spoke as if he had but one wife, ignoring the living wife entirely.

"Mr. Archdeacon, your recovery depends almost entirely upon yourself ; if you keep quiet and do not worry or excite yourself there is no reason why you should not live another ten or fifteen years."

"I don't want to recover ; I should like to see my children once again before I die : they are all I have to care for ; and then, please God, to go to my wife, the wife of my youth, the love of my life."

These last words were spoken in so low a tone the doctor could only just catch them, and the tears rolled down the Archdeacon's pale, shrunken cheeks as he spoke.

"Mr. Archdeacon, your son is, I believe, expected to reach England this week ; I can promise you you will live to see him if you will follow my directions ; everything depends on your keeping quiet, and happily there is no reason why you should not do so ; your brother will attend to all this law business for you ; you need do nothing but lie still and rest," said the doctor. But the Archdeacon only shook his head.

The doctor shook his also when he joined Captain Tempest and Arthur Raleigh downstairs.

"I can't promise you that he will live till Vera returns ; and anyhow the excitement of seeing her will probably be too much for him ; his heart is so weak he may go off at any moment," was his report.

It was decided Captain Raleigh should leave Woodford by the night mail on Wednesday, and meet Vera and Father Ambrose at Southampton on Thursday morning. Accordingly, when the *Hâvre* boat came in, a pale, languid-looking, handsome man went on board, and, regardless of spectators : who by the way were too much occupied with their own affairs to pay much attention to anyone's else's : clasped a fair girl with golden hair and lustrous dark eyes, dressed in white serge trimmed with white astrachan, in his arms, and whispered, as their lips met, the one word :

"Vera !"

And if joy kills, surely those two should have fallen lifeless on the deck, for their cup of joy was full to overflowing. But joy was merciful, and instead of killing them poured new life into their veins and made them feel that earth was heaven, and they forgot in that embrace the purgatory through which they had passed to reach it.

"Vera, my child, where is your luggage ?" asked Father Ambrose.

His voice recalled the lovers to the fact that they were on the deck of a steamer, as it was meant to do ; for Vera's luggage was only a handbag, which the kind old priest was carrying.

"That is all I have, Father Ambrose. Arthur, how is papa ?" said Vera anxiously.

"Much the same ; very weak, but longing to see you."

"Is there no hope ?"

"Yes, he may recover and live for years ; but he does not wish it, and he may go off at any moment."

"My poor father ! I wish I had not left him," said Vera sadly, as she gave Raleigh her hand to help her across the gangway.

"So do I," said Raleigh gently.

But he was thinking of what he had suffered when he met Vera disguised as a nun, not of the Archdeacon ; and resolved to have his

revenge for that on the first opportunity : a resolution he did not fail to keep.

They breakfasted together as soon as they got ashore and then took the train to London, thinking this quicker and less fatiguing than a long journey across country, for they would be able to lunch in town and catch the three o'clock express from Paddington to Woodford. Accordingly, about a quarter to three that afternoon they reached Paddington, and Captain Raleigh was paying the cabman, when, to his surprise and not altogether to his delight, he heard a shout of "Why, Vera !" in a man's voice, and looking round, saw a young, handsome fellow jump from a hansom-cab which drew up in front of Raleigh's and seize Vera in his arms.

"What shocking form !" thought Captain Raleigh, forgetful of the fact that he had acted in the same way a few hours ago on the crowded deck of a steamer ; but Vera appeased him by turning to him and saying :

"Arthur, it is my brother—it is Rex. Rex, this is Captain Raleigh."

Rex had arrived from New York early that morning, and, like the others, had preferred going through London to taking a cross-country route with its inevitable waiting at uninteresting places, and was now on his way down to Woodford. As may well be imagined, there was so much to talk about that the journey was not too long to post Rex up in all that had happened since he left England ; so that by the time they reached Woodford he knew as much as Vera about the diamonds and their recovery, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, and his father's illness. He grew very grave when he learnt the Archdeacon's life hung on a thread, for conscience whispered that his own conduct in making a *mésalliance* had probably helped to shorten his father's life, since it had been a terrible blow to his pride ; and he hoped he would arrive in time to see him alive and to hear that he was forgiven. Vera was scarcely less anxious than Rex, and as the train steamed into Woodford the brother and sister took hold of each other's hands and wondered if they were already fatherless.

There was no one to meet them ; but the station-master told them Captain Tempest had sent word down that the only fly the village boasted was to bring them up, and this was in readiness. So Rex and Vera jumped in, leaving Captain Raleigh to see Father Ambrose to the convent. The drive from the station was only about a mile, but it was uphill and the horse walked most of the way, so it seemed to Rex and Vera the longest part of the journey, and they could scarcely control their impatience. At length they turned into the Rectory drive, and as soon as they were in sight of the house Rex looked out to see if the blinds were still up.

"Thank God, he is alive, Vera ; the blinds are all up. We are in time."

The next minute the fly stopped, and Rex helped Vera out. They

hastened into the hall, where they were met by Mrs. Canter, apparently in an excited state, which the unexpected sight of Rex did not tend to subdue.

"Law, Mr. Rex, is it you?" she exclaimed under her breath.

"Yes, Norah; we met in London. How is my father?"

"Very bad, sir."

"Is there no hope, Norah?" said Vera, clinging to Rex.

"No, my dear; he is dying; you are just in time."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ALL THINGS CHANGE BUT MRS. CANTER.

THE Archdeacon had passed a restless night, and on the morning of the day Vera and Rex arrived he was decidedly worse; so much so that the doctor thought it his duty to inform Mrs. Ryot-Tempest that he did not think her husband would live out the day. While the doctor was still in the house a telegram arrived from Rex, saying he had just arrived at Liverpool and might be expected home in the course of the day; but as he was in ignorance of his father's state of health he did not say by what train.

"What is to be done, sir? Is Mr. Tempest to be told Mr. Rex has arrived?" asked Mrs. Canter of the doctor.

"Yes, you may as well tell him. Of course he must see his son if he lives till he comes; and, really, precaution now is of very little if any use."

Apparently the Archdeacon was aware of his own danger, for when his brother told him Rex would arrive in the course of the day he replied:

"I am glad of it; I want to see him before I die. Vera will be here by the five o'clock train; perhaps he will come with her. I have a great deal to do before then."

Captain Tempest thought his brother's mind must be wandering; for he could not imagine what the Archdeacon, in his weak state, could possibly propose doing.

"My dear Ryot, the best thing you can possibly do is to be still and rest, and husband all your strength for your children's arrival, which will fatigue you."

"I have only a few hours left to work in. I have eternity to rest in, so I mean to do what I have to do. And first I wish a letter sent to Gordon, the Rector of the next parish, to ask him to come and see me this morning; and before he arrives I wish to see my wife. I am going to make my peace with God and with her before I die. Will you ask her to come to me?"

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was alone when Captain Tempest gave her this message. The doctor had just told her the end was not very far off, and she was wondering how she could oust Mrs. Canter from the sick-

room and take her place by her husband's side, when the summon came.

For once in her life she felt awkward and abashed as she entered the Archdeacon's room. She had sinned against him and his motherless girl shamefully; he had been justly angry with her, and if he had sent for her to curse her she could hardly call it unjust. But the Archdeacon was a Christian gentleman, and the Book which lay open on his bed had taught him better than that, though he might not have studied it so much as his Peerage and his *Lemprière*, now laid aside for ever.

She was struck by the change in his appearance since she saw him on Tuesday. She saw at a glance death had laid hold of him. His hours were numbered, and she felt she had shortened their number. As she approached the bedside, the Archdeacon stretched out his hand towards her, and this action touched her more than anything he could have said would have done; for she felt he was offering her forgiveness, and her better nature triumphed. She fell on her knees by his side and whispered:

"Forgive me, Ryot," and the Archdeacon knew this was tantamount to a confession of her sin. He laid his thin white hand with its swollen veins on her bowed head, and said in a low voice:

"God bless you, Poppy."

No more was said on either side; but he knew she had tacitly admitted her treachery, and she knew he forgave her; and the Archdeacon felt the greater part of his day's work was done. It was, perhaps, the best day's work he ever did in his life. It certainly was not an easy task to forgive such an injury to himself and Vera, but he had accomplished it.

After this Mrs. Ryot-Tempest took Mrs. Canter's place by the Archdeacon's desire, and remained in the room the greater part of the day. She was with him when the fly drove up with Vera and Rex. He heard the wheels, and turning to her, said gently:

"These are my children: let me see them alone, please. Vera first."

And when these interviews were over, the Archdeacon felt his work was completed. He had forgiven his son for his clandestine marriage, and he had acknowledged to his daughter he had not been as good a father as he might have been to her; and then, when the sun went down, he went to his rest with his children by his side and their mother's name upon his lips. So died Archdeacon Tempest, a fairly average specimen of a clergyman of the Established Church, such as may be met in many an English parsonage.

"Vera," said Rex that evening, when Captain Raleigh and Father Ambrose had gone to the convent to sleep, "did my father say anything to you about the diamonds?"

"Yes; he said he had forgiven Mrs. Tempest for suspecting me of stealing them, and he hoped I would do the same."

"Was that all he said?"

"No; he said he could not remember hiding the diamonds in the secret drawer; but he had been very ill, and as they were found he wished the case against Mark Brown to be stopped if possible."

"He told me the same. You know, Vera, he never hid those diamonds; that was our step-mother's work. But I see what it is; he wanted to screen her; and so for his sake, not for hers, I think we had better follow suit, and pretend we believe her story," said Rex.

"Very well, dear, let us do so; and what about Mark?"

"Oh! I'll see Deedes about that to-morrow, and ask what can be done. But Uncle George says the case must go on, though perhaps the magistrates may be induced to deal with it themselves instead of sending it for trial."

"All I hope is, I shan't have to give evidence."

"You shan't do that; the case must be adjourned till after the funeral, and before it comes on again you and I will be in Norwich. Raleigh has invited us to go and stay with his mother, and I have accepted."

"Oh! thank you, Rex. But what about Mrs. Ryot-Tempest? Is it right of us to leave her here alone?"

"She is going back to the Grange immediately after the funeral. She told Uncle George she could not remain here; it would remind her of her loss every hour of the day. But, Vera, you look worn out; let us go to bed."

The next morning Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was agreeably surprised to find Rex and Vera were apparently ignorant of her conduct in hiding the diamonds, and since Mrs. Canter had left the Rectory the previous evening she hoped they would not discover it. She owed their ignorance of it to their father's consideration for her, and this fact deepened her regret for the Archdeacon, which to do her justice was sincere; though if Mrs. Canter were to be believed it was not likely to be lasting.

That excellent woman slept at Reuben's cottage the night after her master died, preferring to leave the Rectory on her own account to running the risk of being dismissed by Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"Mr. Tempest is gone, Reuben. Poor gentleman, he went off very quietly," said she, on entering. "And, Reuben, Master Rex has arrived. He and Miss Vera came together, and he is coming to see you to-morrow evening and bring you a parcel from Janet."

"Mr. Rex arrived! Then where is Janet?" exclaimed the blacksmith.

"With some friends of his in New York, who are looking after her while he is in England; she is very well and very happy."

Reuben made no reply to this, but sat with his head buried in his hands; and now and then Mrs. Canter saw a great tear drop through his outstretched fingers.

"Reuben," she said, suddenly, "I'll tell you what it is: I can't be in two places at once; no mortal woman could; and it seems to me I spend as much of my time here as I do at Marling, so I shall leave at Michaelmas and come back to Woodford. It is lonely for you, now Janet is married, and I am sick of those Marling people and their ways. I don't know how to live in a place where Tuesday is washing-day; turning the week topsy-turvy: it isn't right, and what is more it isn't Christian. I should not wonder if they make Monday Sunday next year; they might as well, for all the work they'll do or let others do on Mondays. However, I have had enough of Marling. There is that fool of a postman, too, never brings me a letter but he makes me an offer of marriage, and no use for me to tell him I am a widow; though I will say that is the fault of widows who marry again. Men would know their place well enough if women only kept in their own. Anyhow my place seems to be Woodford, so I'll take my old cottage again at Michaelmas. Half my time now is spent on the railway, for Miss Vera will have me come over for the funeral next Tuesday, and I suppose I shall be wanted to give evidence again next week if the case goes on."

Mrs. Canter talked on to give Reuben time to recover himself. She was not certain if her plan would meet with his approbation and he did not enlighten her till she was leaving the next morning, when he said:

"I'll look in at your old cottage to-day, Norah; it will want doing up before you come back to it." And Mrs. Canter knew he was pleased.

He was, for as she said his life was very lonely now, and his interview with Rex told him it was much better for everyone that he and Janet should settle in Manitoba, if not for life at least for a very long time to come. So his daughter was practically dead to him, and Mrs. Canter if she lived close to him would certainly cheer his loneliness. The children, too, would be a comfort to him. Mary Jane was growing very like her Aunt Janet; perhaps her mother would spare her to live with him. He thought she would, not so much from his knowledge of his sister as from his faith in the saying: "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb!" And when he made the proposal to Mrs. Canter on the day of the Archdeacon's funeral, she promised to allow Mary Jane to please herself, which Reuben knew was virtually accepting his offer.

The funeral was well attended. Vera and Rex followed their father to the grave; Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was not equal to such an ordeal. According to Mrs. Canter she spent the time in settling who was to be her third husband. At any rate she watched the procession through the venetian blinds of her bed-room and regretted that the ritual to be observed was more according to the Archdeacon's taste than her own: which fact was her real reason for not going to the funeral.

The will was read on the return of the funeral party. The Archdeacon had not much to leave, but the little he had was divided equally between Rex and Vera with the exception of a few pictures which were left to Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who announced her intention of moving into the Grange immediately.

"It was dear Ryot's wish. We should have moved in at once had he been spared, so I should not like to delay it a day longer than I can help, sad and lonely as the move will be," she remarked, looking very handsome in her new widow's mourning.

"There is no need to do so : the living may be filled up at once, so the sooner we all vacate the better. Both Vera and I are going to live abroad for the present, so the bulk of the furniture will be sold," said Rex.

"And what will Vera do? Will she come with me to the Grange until her marriage?" asked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"No. She and Rex are going to Norwich to-morrow for a fortnight, and then she will come to me and be married from my house," said Captain Tempest.

"And what about Mark Brown's trial; won't Vera be wanted to give evidence?" asked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest with more anxiety than she cared to show; for she was dreadfully afraid her conduct should be publicly known.

"The case will come on next Friday, but no more evidence will be taken. I have seen the magistrates and they will deal with the case themselves; they won't send it for trial," said Mr. Deedes, to the intense relief of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

She was still more relieved on Friday when Holmes, whom she sent to hear the case, returned from the Court to tell her it was finished at last. Freeman was discharged, but under police surveillance; and Mark Brown was sentenced to two years' hard labour for perjury, the severest sentence the magistrates had it in their power to give; and, as they told him, he might congratulate himself on having got off so easily, for had the case been sent for trial he would have had penal servitude.

"Were the diamonds mentioned, Holmes?"

"Yes, ma'am, just mentioned. Mr. Deedes said he was glad to say they were found and had not been stolen; that was all."

"Ah! your poor master, how ill he was! No wonder his memory failed him at the last," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, drying her eyes gently so as not to make them red, after a fashion she had discovered when her first husband departed.

"No wonder, ma'am," echoed Holmes, but if there was irony in her tone her mistress did not detect it.

"Thank God, that matter is at an end! But it has aged me even more than the poor Archdeacon's death. I must go abroad for a change after the first three months are over. People will have forgotten all about the diamonds by the time I come back. Poor dear

Ryot! I fear I shall deteriorate now I no longer have a husband to look up to: women ought to live in subjection. I might do worse than I did when I accepted the Archdeacon. He was not a bad husband. We should have been happy enough if it had not been for Vera. Step-children are a mistake, especially step-daughters. But widowhood is a dangerous state; it is so apt to make one selfish. However, I must do my best."

These reflections were made as Mrs. Ryot-Tempest made a careful inspection of the lines on her face in her looking-glass. Whether her best was to get another husband or to avoid being selfish did not appear. And if she added a secret rider to the effect that her next husband should have no such encumbrances as step-daughters, we will respect her confidence. She will marry again some day, and so fulfil the remainder of Mrs. Canter's prophecy; but as for the step-daughters, she must take her chance. After all, they might relieve the monotony of married life. It is a poor salad that has no vinegar. She contributed the vinegar to her second marriage and the mustard too; but as it burnt her tongue, she will contribute only the oil to her third, and leave the more pungent condiments to someone else.

And here we take leave of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who was not invited to Vera's wedding. She could not have gone had she been asked, so soon after her husband's death; but she felt the slight, and it was intended that she should; for Rex settled this little matter, and Captain Raleigh agreed that it was better under the circumstances not to invite her, though Vera if left to herself would have done so. Rex gave his sister away, and Father Ambrose married them according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, into which Vera had been finally received before leaving the convent at Avranches. The wedding was very quiet, only the immediate relations of the bride and bridegroom being present.

"Vera," said Captain Raleigh as the train bore them away on their honeymoon, "do you think I can make you happy?"

"Arthur, I know you can," said Vera, with her beautiful head on his heart; and since she was so confident it does not become us to have any doubts upon the point.

Married life is chequered with light and shade, like all life this side the grave. It is not till we reach the land of light and love that we can bear to live always in the light. So Captain and Mrs. Raleigh will sometimes be overshadowed by clouds, and it would be very bad for them if it were otherwise.

(THE END.)

DR. MARSH'S DAUGHTERS.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

I.

A DAZZLING gleam of white favours flashed into the admiring eyes of numerous spectators, as a string of carriages and horses turned prancing away from the church of a noted suburb of the metropolis. The gay and handsome Augusta Marsh had just become Mrs. Courtenay, and the bridal party were now returning home to the wedding breakfast.

Dr. Marsh, a physician, was popular in his small locality, and his five daughters were attractive girls, firmly expecting to make good marriages, although it was understood that they would have no fortune, for the Doctor lived up to his income, if not beyond it. The first to carry out the expectation was Augusta, who married Captain Courtenay.

The Captain was only a captain by courtesy. He had sold out of the army and lived upon his property, seven hundred a-year. Quite sufficient to marry upon, thought Augusta; but the Captain, what with his club, his tailor, his opera, and his other bachelor expenses, had found it little enough for himself. He met Augusta Marsh, fell in love with her, and determined to renounce folly and settle down into a married man. Dr. Marsh had no objection, Augusta had less; so a home was set up at Kensington, and this was the wedding-day.

It need not be described: they are all alike: if the reader has passed his, he knows what it is; if not, he can live in expectation. Captain and Mrs. Courtenay departed at two o'clock on their wedding tour, the guests followed, and the family were left alone, to themselves and to Aunt Clem. Aunt Clem, a sister of Dr. Marsh's, rejoiced in the baptismal name of Clementina, which had been long since shortened by her nieces into Clem. She was a woman of some judgment, shrewd and penetrating, especially with regard to her nieces' faults; and whenever Aunt Clem wrote word from the country that she was coming on a visit, they called it a black-letter day.

"I am so upset!" uttered Mrs. Marsh, sitting down with a half-groan.

"That's through eating custard in a morning," said Aunt Clem.

"Eating nonsense," returned Mrs. Marsh. "Did you see that young man who sat next to—which of the girls was it?—to you, Annis, I think: did you notice him, Clementina?"

"Yes. A nice-looking man."

"Nice-looking! Why, he has not a handsome feature in his face!"

"A nice countenance, for all that," persisted Aunt Clem. "One you may confide in at the first glance. What of him?"

"I am horribly afraid he is going to propose for one of the girls. He dropped a few words to me; and now, instead of leaving the house, he is downstairs, closeted with the Doctor. Which of you girls is it that has been persuading him to do this?" cried Mrs. Marsh, abruptly turning to her daughters. "Annis, why are you looking so red?"

Annis Marsh did look red, and very conscious. An attachment, hidden hitherto from all but themselves, existed between her and Geoffrey Lance, and they had come to the resolution to make it known. Mrs. Marsh's surmise that he was now speaking to the Doctor was correct; and the Doctor came up with the news.

"What answer did you give him?" asked Mrs. Marsh.

"Told him that if he and Annis had made up their minds to try it, I should not say nay," replied the Doctor. "And asked him to come in and spend the evening with us."

Mrs. Marsh looked daggers; three of the young ladies looked the same. "Let them marry, Dr. Marsh! let them marry upon nothing!"

"Oh, come, it's not so bad as that," said the Doctor. "He has three hundred a-year. What did you and I begin life upon, my dear? Annis, ask your mamma if it was not considerably less than that."

"Nonsense!" crossly responded Mrs. Marsh, as the Doctor went out, laughing. "The cases are not at all alike, Annis; you must see that they are not. Your papa's was a rising profession; and Lance will stick at his three hundred a-year all his life."

"What is this Mr. Lance?" inquired Aunt Clem. "A gentleman?"

"Oh, of course a gentleman. He was destined for the Bar, but his father died, and there was a difficulty about money. I believe he did eat his dinners and was called, but he had nothing left to live upon whilst practice came in, and was glad to accept the secretaryship of a public institution. He gets three hundred a-year, and will never get more, for it is a fixed salary, not a rising one. Don't be led into absurdity, Annis."

"Mamma," said Annis, going up to her and speaking in low tones, full of emotion, "I will never marry against your approbation, neither would Geoffrey take me on such terms. But I hope you will not hold out against us. I have heard you say how much you liked him."

"So I do, Annis," answered Mrs. Marsh, somewhat appeased by the words and tone; "but you never heard me say that I liked his

income, or thought him a desirable match for one of my daughters. Three hundred a-year! It's quite ridiculous, child."

"We have considered it in all points, dearest mamma, and talked it over a great deal," resumed Annis, timidly, "and we feel sure that we shall do very well upon it, and live comfortably. You know I have had some experience in keeping house on small means at Aunt Ruttley's."

"For goodness' sake, Annis, don't bring up Aunt Ruttley," interrupted Sophy Marsh. "The poor Curate's stipend is only a hundred a-year, with the parsonage to live in and a flock of children to fill it. You are general factotum when you are staying there, I expect. They must live upon bread and cheese half their time, and pinch and contrive from year's end to year's end."

"But do you not see that my insight into how they manage their contriving will be of great service to me?" returned Annis, in patient tones. "Mamma, I know I could manage well on three hundred a-year, and have everything comfortable about me. You should detect no narrowness in my house, come as often as you would."

"If Lance had a prospect of an increase—of rising to five or six hundred in the course of a few years—I would let you promise to marry him then with all my heart, Annis."

"But the very fact of his not having it, of his income being a fixed one, has induced us to wish to risk it, mamma. If we wait, it will be no better; and—oh, mamma! pray don't say that we must separate!"

"Annis, child," interrupted Aunt Clem, "if you spend three hundred the first year, you'll want four the second, and five the third."

"But we do not intend to spend three the first year," said Annis, quickly. "Our old nurse had a favourite saying, which she always impressed upon us when we saw the sugar cup full and asked for more sugar. I repeated it one day to Geoffry, and made him laugh. 'Spare at the sack's mouth.' It is what we mean to do with our income."

"No unmarried girl can form an idea how expenses increase after the first few months," continued Aunt Clem.

"I suppose they do," assented Annis. "The wear and tear of furniture, which must be replaced, and breakages, and buying new clothes, when the old ones are worn out. All that comes."

"Ah," said Aunt Clem, "there's something worse comes. Babies."

"Oh—babies," said Annis, in a dubious tone; "I have heard they bring love with them."

"It is to be hoped they do, poor things," sharply rejoined Aunt Clem, "or I don't know what would become of them. But they don't bring money."

"Well," said Annis, with a glowing cheek, "we have determined to try it, with all its hazards, if only papa and mamma will approve."

"And suppose your papa and mamma do not approve?"

"Then we must wait patiently for better days," sighed Annis.

"And live upon hope," said Aunt Clem, "which is about as satisfactory as living upon air. Well, Annis, I side with you. You shall have my helping word for it."

"You are not serious, Clementina!" exclaimed Mrs. Marsh.

"Indeed I am. I should not counsel every girl to marry upon three hundred a-year, but Annis and Mr. Lance seem to have well considered what they are about, and are prepared to make the best of its difficulties."

II.

IN a neighbourhood where house-rent was cheaper than at Kensington, but within a walk of it, did Mr. and Mrs. Lance settle down. For the full consent of Mrs. Marsh was won over, the wedding took place, and they were fairly launched in life, for better or for worse, upon their three hundred a-year. Their rent was moderate, and for its size the house was really a handsome-looking house, which a gentleman need not be ashamed to acknowledge as his residence. Annis seemed fully determined to carry out her scheme of economy: though, in doing this, she gave great umbrage, in one or two points, to some of her family. Upon the return of Mrs. Marsh and her daughters from their two months' annual sojourn at the sea-side, the young ladies hastened to call upon Annis, who had then been married about five months. It should be observed that Annis, being of a quiet, patient, useful disposition, had always been considerably dictated to and snubbed by her sisters; and now that she was married they forgot to discontinue the habit.

"Such bad management, Annis!" began Sophy at once. "Three o'clock in the day, and your cook answered the door to us. Where was Rebecca?"

"Rebecca is gone," replied Mrs. Lance. "I have only Mary."

"Only Mary!" uttered Miss Sophy, aghast. "Emily, did you hear that? What can you mean, Annis?"

"Well, it happened in this way," said Annis. "Rebecca did not suit: she was careless, insolent to Mary, and caused much trouble. So I gave her warning. It then occurred to me that as my wedding visits had been all paid to me, and we were not likely to see much ceremonious company, I might as well, for a time, keep only Mary. So I spoke to Geoffry, and he told me to try it if I liked, and Mary said she would rather be alone than have the annoyance of a servant like Rebecca. You cannot think how well it answers. Mary is a most excellent servant, knows her work, and does it thoroughly; and

she is always neat. You know her to be the cook, but you could not have told so from her appearance. She is not fine, it is true, but more respectable-looking than many of the house and parlour-maids."

"But such a degrading thing to keep only one servant!" remonstrated Miss Marsh. "Like the common people!"

"Ours is only a common income," laughed Annis. "I told papa what I had done one day that he drove here to see me, and he praised me for it."

"Oh, papa has such old-fashioned notions; something like your own, Annis. Wait till you hear what mamma says to it. One servant! it must tell against you with all your friends."

"No," replied Mrs. Lance, warmly; "or if it could, they would be friends not worth retaining. If they came here and found my house full of confusion, of discomfort, my servant untidy, myself unpresentable, they might have reason; but, excepting that they do not see two servants, everything is as orderly and nice as when Rebecca was here. I and my husband are not the less gentlepeople, and I am sure that they rather respect us the more for sacrificing custom to right. If we happen to have anyone to dine with us, or two or three friends for the evening, Mary sends round for her sister, who waits well."

"But how on earth do you manage with one servant? Augusta, with her three, complains bitterly that the work is not half done."

"There is an impression with many experienced people that the greater your number of servants, the less is your work done," smiled Mrs. Lance. "There is really not so much to do in this house, and plenty of time to do it in. We breakfast at eight, which gives Geoffry——"

"Eight! Do you contrive to get up?"

"Yes," said Annis, "and like it much better than our lazy hours at home. By nine, or soon after, Geoffry leaves, which gives him time to walk in comfortably to the office by a quarter to ten."

"You don't mean to say he walks?"

"Yes, and walks home, except in very bad weather. He says were it not for this walk, night and morning, he should not have sufficient exercise to keep him in health; and of course it is so much omnibus money saved. He laughs at those gentlemen who ride into town, and sit stewing in their chambers, or in an office or counting-house all day, especially those who have need to be frugal, as we have, and then ride home again: no exercise, no economy, and in time it will be no health. Well—Geoffry goes at nine. Then Mary takes away the breakfast-things, washes them up, puts her kitchen straight, and goes to her upstairs work, which in our house is not much. By eleven o'clock she has frequently changed her gown and cap, and has no more to do until time to prepare for dinner at five. One day she asked me if I could not give her some socks of her master's to darn, as she did not like sitting with her hands before her."

"Your house is quite a prodigy," cried Sophy, in tones bordering on sarcasm. "It seems there is never any cleaning going on."

"I did not say so," retorted Annis. "In a small house—small compared with ours at home—with only three people in it, and the paint, and carpets, and furniture all new, there is not a great deal of cleaning required, but what there is, is punctually done. Mary has her days for it, and on those days I help her."

"With the scrubbing?" asked Miss Marsh, with an impervious face.

"No," laughed Annis. "Whilst she does that, I go into the kitchen, wash up the breakfast things, and, should it be required, help to prepare dinner."

"Prepare for a five o'clock dinner at nine in the morning?"

"Yes, all that can be done to it. I make the pudding or the tart, should we be going to have one that day; or, if there is any meat to be hashed, I cut it up: those sort of things. Then I dust the drawing-room—and indeed I generally do that, for its ornaments take so long, and on these busy days I dust my own bedroom; and, in short, do many little odds and ends of work, so that Mary gets through her cleaning and is dressed almost as soon as on other days."

"It is a fortunate thing Mr. Lance's choice fell upon you, Annis. We should not like to be degraded to the business of a servant-of-all-work."

"There is no degradation in it," cried Annis, with spirit. "What degradation can there be? Were I a nobleman's daughter or a millionaire's, my condescending to know practically anything about it would be out of place; but in our position—yes, Emily, I speak of ours—mine and yours—it is anything but derogatory to help in these domestic trifles. If it takes me an hour a day—and it does not take me more on an average; I don't know what it may do in time—what then? It is an hour well spent; an hour that I might fritter away, if I did not have it to do. It does not make my hands less fit for my drawing afterwards or my embroidery, and it does not soil my morning dress, for I have made a large brown holland apron to go nearly round me, and I turn up my sleeves; in short, it does not render me one whit less the lady, when I sit in my drawing-room and receive any friend who may call upon me. Do I look less like one to you?"

"Psha, Annis! You picked up these notions of kitchen management at poor Aunt Ruttle's, but you ought not to be forming your ideas upon them."

"And very glad I am that I did pick them up. But if I had not, if I had had as little experience in domestic usefulness as you, I believe they would have come to me with the necessity."

"Oh, no doubt," said Sophy, scornfully; "you were inclined by nature to these low-lived notions, Annis."

"There are notions abroad," gravely responded Mrs. Lance, "that for people in our pretentious class of society (I cannot help calling it so, for we ape the ideas and manners only suited to those far above us), all participation in, all acquaintance even, with domestic duties is a thing to be ashamed of, never to be owned to, but contemptuously denied. They are wrong notions, wicked notions; false and hollow: for they lead to embarrassment, to unpaid debts, to the wronging of our neighbours; and the sooner the fashion goes out, the more sensible society will prove itself. I don't know which is the worst: a woman who entirely neglects to look after her household, where her station and circumstances demand it, or one who makes herself a domestic drudge. Both extremes are bad, and both should be avoided."

"Do you mean that as a cut at Augusta?" asked Miss Marsh—"the neglecting her household?"

"No, Emily, I was speaking generally," replied Mrs. Lance; "though I wish Augusta did look a little more to hers. It would have been well for us, I think, had mamma brought us up in a more domestic manner. There is another fallacy of the present day: bringing up young ladies to play and dance, but utterly incapable as to the ruling of a household."

"Speak for yourself, if you please, Annis. We would rather be excused kitchen rule."

"Why, look at Augusta," returned Mrs. Lance; "would it be well for her, or not, to check and direct her household? Their expenditure must be very large: too large, I fear, for the Captain's income."

"At any rate, you seem determined not to err on the same side. Take care you do not degenerate into the domestic drudge, Annis."

"I shall never do that—at least, if I know myself," quickly replied Mrs. Lance. "I have too much regard for my husband, am too solicitous to retain his respect and affection: a domestic drudge cannot remain a refined, well-informed woman, an enlightened companion. We keep up our literary tastes, our reading; and our evenings are delightful. No, I shall escape that, I hope, Emily; though I am learning to iron."

"I wonder you don't learn to wash," indignantly retorted Miss Marsh.

"I did wash a pair of lace sleeves the other morning," laughed Mrs. Lance, "but they turned out so yellow that Mary had to submit them to some whitening process of her own, and I do not think I shall try again. She washes all my lace things and Geoffry's collars, and she is teaching me to iron them. Ironing was an accomplishment I did not see much of at the parsonage, for I believe everything in the whole weekly wash was mangled, except my uncle's shirts and bands. His surplice always was; aunt used to say he

would know no better. I am trying to be very useful, I assure you, I go to market."

"Go where?"

"To market. To the butcher's and the greengrocer's, and to the other tradespeople. Not every day, but on a Saturday always, and perhaps once in the week besides."

"To save the legs of the boys who come round for orders?" asked Miss Jemima Marsh, who was a very silent girl, and rarely spoke.

"No. To save Geoffry's pocket," replied Mrs. Lance. "For the first two or three months we ordered everything that way, but I found it would not do. With meat especially. We had unprofitable joints, without knowing the weight or the price, for in delivering the orders to the boy, the butcher of course sends what he likes, and charges what he likes. Now that I go myself to the butcher's I choose my meat, and see it weighed, and know the price of everything before I buy it. It is a very great economy."

"I don't think Annis is wrong there," decided Sophy; "for many very good families go to market themselves."

"And I wish more did," added Mrs. Lance. "I wish you could persuade Augusta into doing so. I spoke to her about it, and she asked me whether I was out of my mind."

"There is less occasion for Mrs. Courtenay to trouble herself," said Miss Marsh, loftily; "she did not marry upon three hundred a-year."

"Well, I am very happy," said Annis brightly, "although we have only three hundred a-year."

"And one servant," interposed Miss Marsh.

"And one servant," laughed Annis. "But I assure you we manage better without Rebecca than with her, and as we shall be obliged in a few months' time to take a second servant, I thought we ought to do with one until then."

III.

THE time went on till Mrs. Courtenay had three children and Mrs. Lance had two, the former to her unspeakable dismay.

For she could not afford it. No; Captain and Mrs. Courtenay had afforded themselves too many luxuries to leave room for that of babies. They had committed a terrible mistake in marrying upon their seven hundred a-year, and that not an increasing income. It was not only that they had set up their household and begun housekeeping upon a scale that would absorb every shilling of it, but the ex-Captain, accustomed to his clubs and their expensive habits, was not a man who could practise economy out of doors, any more than his wife understood it within. The Captain could not put on a soiled pair of gloves; he

could not give up his social habits ; he never dreamt of such a thing as not going to the opera several times in the season, and to the theatres *ad libitum*, his wife being often with him ; it never occurred to him to give up his daily bottle of expensive wine, and he rarely scrupled to take a cab, when an omnibus, or his own legs, would have served as well. They began housekeeping upon three servants—two maids, and a tiger, who ate as much as the whole house put together. The house was larger than that of Mrs. Lance, and they kept more company, but two efficient servants, with proper management, might have done the work well ; only it was necessary, for appearance' sake, so both Captain and Mrs. Courtenay deemed, to take (not being able to afford a footman) a third maid or a tiger : and they took the last-named article. Next came the babies, and with the advent of the first, the tiger was discharged and a third maid taken in his place : and now that there were three children there were four maids.

Captain and Mrs. Courtenay also liked to go out of town in autumn, and they were fond of gaiety, went to parties and gave them. Their housekeeping was on an extensive scale compared with their income : Mrs. Courtenay was no manager ; she knew literally nothing of practical domestic details when she married, and she did not attempt to acquire them. Her servants were improvident and wasteful ; she could not shut her eyes to that ; but her attempts at remedying the evil only amounted to an occasional storm of scolding, and to sending off cook after cook. They fell into debt, they went deeper into it with every month and year, and Captain Courtenay, besieged out of his seven senses, was fain to patch up matters by borrowing money of a gentleman named Ishmael Levi. Of course he fleeced him wholesale.

Their real troubles of life were looming ominously near, the fruits of their short-sighted union, of their improvident course. Captain Courtenay and his wife, with their seven hundred a-year, had launched into marriage, their friends rejoicing over their assured prospects : Mr. Lance and Annis, and their despised three hundred, had been brow-beaten in society for daring to risk it : but the despised ones were conquerors, and the lauded ones had failed. How was it ? The one party had looked their future full in the face, and deliberately resolved to confine their simple desires within less than their income, arming themselves against temptation ; the other had not so looked at it, but had brought themselves into embarrassment through what they would have called sheer inability to keep out of it. They had not calculated ; they had begun life too expensively ; had not controlled their self-indulgences ; everything was on too large a scale : and now neither knew how to go back to a smaller.

They were sitting together one dull winter's day, very dull themselves, and talking over the aspect of affairs in a dull strain. The aspect was worse than either thought : Mrs. Courtenay really did not know its extent, and the Captain was blind and careless. The Captain

had received his quarterly income, and had immediately parted with most of it, for sundry demands were pressing. How they were to go on to the next quarter, and how the Christmas bills were to be paid, was hidden in the womb of the future.

"They are so much larger than usual," murmured Captain Courtenay, drawing a china basket towards him, the bills' receptacle, and leisurely proceeding to unfold some of them.

"Each year brings additional expense," remarked Mrs. Courtenay. "Four servants cost more than three: not to speak of the children; though they are but little expense yet."

Captain Courtenay had the contents of one of the bills under his eye at the time his wife spoke. "Little expense, you say, Augusta! I suppose this is for them, and it's pretty nearly twenty pounds. It's headed 'Clare's Baby-linen Warehouse.'"

"I meant in the matter of food. Of course they have to be clothed: and I don't know anything more costly than infants' dress. Cambric, and lace, and bassinettes, and all the rest of it."

"So I should think," quoth the Captain; "here's thirty shillings for six shirts. Do you put babies into shirts?"

"What else should we put them into?"

"How long are they—a foot? Five shillings a shirt! Why, it's nearly as much as I give for mine."

"Delicate French cambric, trimmed with Valenciennes," explained Mrs. Courtenay. "We can't dress a baby in hopsacking."

"Lace is the largest item in the bill. Here's three pounds eighteen shillings for lace, Augusta."

"Oh, they are dreadful little things to destroy their cap borders. When they get three or four months old, up go their hands and away they pull, and the lace is soon in tatters. This last darling baby has already destroyed two."

"Throw off their caps and let them pull at their own heads, if they want to pull," cried the Captain. "That's how I should cure them, Augusta."

"Would you," retorted Mrs. Courtenay. "A baby without a cap is frightful. Except for its long white robes, no one could tell whether it was a monkey or a child."

"Some of this lace is charged half-a-crown a yard, and some three and sixpence."

"The three and sixpenny was for the christening. Of course *that* had to be good."

"I saw some lace marked up at twopence a yard, yesterday, in Oxford Street, quite as pretty as any the baby wears, for all I can see. That would be good enough to tear, Augusta."

"My dear, as you don't understand babies' things, the remark may be excused," said Mrs. Courtenay. "Common rubbish of cotton lace is not fit——"

"Hallo!" shouted the Captain, with an emphasis that startled his

wife, as he opened another of the bills, "here's ninety-four pounds for meat this year!"

"So I saw," mournfully replied Mrs. Courtenay.

"How can we have eaten meat to that amount? We can't have eaten it."

"I suppose *we* have not eaten it, you and I; but it has been consumed in the house," was the testy rejoinder of Mrs. Courtenay, whose conscience secretly accused her of something being radically wrong in the housekeeping department, and which she, its head, did not know how to set right.

"Besides the fish and poultry bills, and lots of game we had sent us, and I sometimes dining at the club! How is it, Augusta?"

"I wish I could tell how it is," she answered: "that is, I wish I could tell how to lessen it. The bills come in weekly, and I look them over, and there's not a single joint that seems to have been had in unnecessarily. They do eat enormously in the kitchen; but how is it to be prevented? We cannot lock up the food."

"The servants must be outrageously extravagant."

"I often tell you so, but you don't listen; and I am at continual warfare with the cook. As to the butter that goes, it must melt, for it never can be used. She makes out that you and I and the children eat four pounds of fresh butter every week. And they are so exacting about their own dinner. They are not satisfied with what remainder of meat may be in the house and making it do—meat that I know would be amply sufficient—but must have something in addition—pork chops, or sausages, or something of the sort. And thus the meat bill runs up."

Captain Courtenay answered only by a gesture of annoyance. Perhaps his wife took it as a reflection upon herself.

"But what am I to do, Robert? I cannot go and preside at their dinner, and portion it out; and I cannot say so-and-so is enough and you shall have no more, when cook declares it is not enough. I tell them they are not to eat meat at supper, but I may as well tell the sun not to shine, for I know they do eat it. I would turn them off to-morrow, every one of them, if I thought I could change for the better; but I might only get worse, for they would be sure to go and give the place a bad name, out of revenge."

"Can't you change the cook?"

"I have changed her three times in the last year, and each one seems to have less notion of economy than the last. They are fair-spoken before my face and second all I say, but the extravagance is not diminished."

Captain Courtenay opened the bills—bill by bill—and laid them in a pile on the table. "Augusta," said he, in a gravely serious tone, "we must retrench, or we shall soon be in a hobble."

"I am willing," answered his wife; "but where can we begin?"

"Let us consider," resumed the Captain, thoughtfully; "where

can it be? It cannot be in the rent and taxes; of course they must go on just the same; and the insurance; and I must pay the interest of the money we owe; and we must have our meals as usual. We must dismiss one of the servants."

"*That's* equally impossible," returned Mrs. Courtenay. "Which would you dismiss? Three children, two of them in arms, as may be said, require two nurses, and cannot be attended to without. Then there must be two for the house: one could not wait, and cook, and clean, and answer the door—oh, impossible."

Captain Courtenay leaned his head upon his hand: it did indeed seem as if there was not the slightest loophole in the domestic department which afforded a chance of retrenchment.

"Miss Marsh," said the housemaid, ushering in a lady.

Mrs. Courtenay looked round for her sister Emily, but it was Aunt Clem.

"Well," said she, as the Captain, with whom she was a favourite, ensconced her into the warmest seat, "and how are you getting on?"

"Middling," laughed the Captain. "Looking blue over the Christmas bills."

"Ah," said Aunt Clem, as she took off her bonnet, "they are often written on blue paper. You should settle your bills weekly; it is the safest and most economical plan: if you let them run on, you pay for it through the nose."

"I wish these accounts could be paid, even through the nose," cried the Captain. "Our expenses are getting the mastery, Aunt Clem, and we cannot see where to retrench. We were talking about it now."

"Is that heap all bills? Let me look at them. You need have no secrets from an old woman like me."

The Captain tossed them into her lap, and the first she looked at happened to be the one for the baby-linen. Aunt Clem studied it through her spectacles, and then studied Augusta's face.

"Never saw anything so extravagant in my life. Who did you think you were buying for? A little princess?"

Augusta was too nettled to reply.

"I don't see that a baby ought to cost as much as a man," put in the Captain; "but Augusta tells me I know nothing about it. I could get half a dozen shirts for thirty shillings."

"Of course you could. And these ought to have cost six."

"Now, aunt!" resentfully ejaculated Augusta. "How, pray?"

"Six shillings at the very outside. You should have bought the lawn and made them yourself."

"Babies' shirts at a shilling apiece!" said Augusta, scornfully. "These are richly trimmed with Valenciennes lace and insertion, Aunt Clem."

"Trim my old bedgown with Valenciennes!" irreverently snapped Aunt Clem. "It would be just as sensible a trick. What sees the

shirt when the baby has it on? Nonsense, Augusta! Valenciennes lace may be very well in its proper place, but not for those who can't pay their Christmas bills."

Augusta was indignant. The Captain only smiled.

"What's this last?" continued Aunt Clem. "Lace?—four pounds, less two shillings, for lace? Here, take your bill; I have seen enough of it. No wonder you find your accounts heavy, if they are all on this scale."

"It is not dear," fired Augusta. "Half-a-crown a yard—the other was for the christening—is cheap for babies' lace."

"I told Augusta I saw some yesterday in a shop window at twopence a yard, and it looked as well," observed the Captain.

"I don't quite say that," said Aunt Clem; "twopenny lace would neither look nor wear well. But there's another sort of lace, of medium quality, used almost exclusively for infants' caps——"

"Trumpery cotton trash!" interrupted Mrs. Courtenay.

"It is a very pretty lace, rich-looking and durable," went on Aunt Clem, disdaining the interruption, "and if not thread, it looks like it; but I believe it to be thread. It will last for two children, and it costs about ninepence a yard. Annis has never bought any other."

"How can you say so, aunt? I'm sure her children's caps always look nice."

"I know they do. You don't believe in this lace, because you have not looked out for it," observed Aunt Clem. "You go to Clare's—stepping out of a cab, I daresay, at the door—and ask to look at some good nursery lace. Of course they show you the real; they don't attempt to show you anything inferior. But Annis, when she was buying these things, went to Clare's—and I happened to be with her: she did not ask, off-hand, for rich lace, or real lace, she said, 'Have you a cheaper description of lace that will wear and answer the purpose?' and they showed her what I tell you of. She bought no other, and very well it has worn and looks; it lasted her first baby, and it is lasting this one. I was so pleased with her method of going to work—not in the way of caps alone, mind you, but of everything—that I sent her four yards of pillow lace from the country for a best cap for her child. At the time you were married," added Aunt Clem, looking at them both over her spectacles, "I said you would not do half as well as Lance and Annis, though you had more than double their income. You are the wrong sort of folk."

"At any rate, I cannot be expected to understand lace," said the Captain.

"But you might understand other things, and give them up," returned Aunt Clem. "You might give up your West-end society, and your gaieties, and your extravagant mode of dressing——"

"I'm sure I don't dress extravagantly," interrupted the Captain.

"I'm sure you do," said Aunt Clem: "in that way you are worse than Augusta, and she's bad enough. It may not be ex-

travagant in the abstract, but it is extravagant in proportion to your income. You might also give up having parties at home, and going out to them, and your wine at your club, and your theatres. Unless a man who has only a limited income can resign these amusements, he has no right to marry. But in saying this, I wish to cast no reflection on those who cannot: all men are not calculated by nature to economise in domestic privacy; only, let such keep single."

"I suppose you think I was not," laughed Captain Courtenay.

"I am positive you were not. Nor Augusta either. And you'll have a hard fight and tussle before you can submit to its hardships. They will be sore hardships to you; to Lance and his wife they are pleasures; yet he is just as much of a gentleman as you are, and was brought up as expensively. But you are of totally different dispositions."

"What a pity we were not differently paired, since they are the two clever ones, and we the incapables; I with Lance, and Annis with Robert!" exclaimed Augusta, sarcastically.

"Then there would be four incapables instead of two—or what would amount to the same," unceremoniously observed Aunt Clem. "You would have spent poor Lance out of house and home; and Annis would have led a weary and wretched life of it, for the Captain's expenses out of doors would have rendered futile her economy at home. No, you have been rightly paired. You have not half the comfort with your seven hundred a-year that they have upon three."

"Go on, go on, Aunt Clem," cried Augusta; "why don't you magnify them into angels? More comfort than we have! Look at our home, our mode of life, and compare it with theirs; their paltry two servants and their shabby living. I don't suppose they take wine once in a month."

"And *not* taking it, do not feel the want of it. But when you say shabby living, you are prejudiced, Augusta. Though their dinners are plain, there is always plenty, and what more can people want."

The Captain laughed, for Aunt Clem had talked herself into a heat. "As to wine, Lance might surely manage to allow himself half a pint every day," said he.

"If Lance were intent on his own gratification, I daresay he would," answered Aunt Clem.

"He and Annis might be comfortable in housekeeping matters on three hundred a-year."

"Remarkably so," was Aunt Clem's response. "But the worst of it is, there are other expenses, and plenty of them. Rent, taxes, insurance, clothes, wages, doctors, omnibuses, books, newspapers, and wear and tear of linen and furniture, besides church and charity, for Lance and his wife have nothing of the heathen about them. None of these items come under the head of eatables and drinkables, but all have to be provided for out of the three hundred a-year. What's your butcher's bill annually?" abruptly asked Aunt Clem.

"Ninety-four pounds this year," said the Captain.

Aunt Clem groaned. "That comes of having two dinners."

"How do you mean? We only take one dinner a day."

"Two dinners," repeated Aunt Clem; "one for you and another for the servants. They ought to dine after you."

"But the servants must dine," said Mrs. Courtenay. "It cannot signify as to cost whether they dine early or late."

"It signifies everything, and by having two dinners the meat bill gets almost doubled. What are your servants having for dinner to-day?"

"To-day—oh, they have a shoulder of mutton."

"And what shall you have?"

"We are going to have minced veal and a fowl."

"Minced veal! the most unprofitable dish anyone can put upon their table. You may take an unlimited quantity of it and still be hungry. But that's not my present argument. If you had only one dinner, the shoulder of mutton would have served you all; your table first and theirs afterwards, and there'd be one expense. And the servants cannot have their rule over the meat so uncontrolled; less comes into the house; less remains cold; and cold meat does not go so far as hot, and when hashed and minced it is half wasted."

"Our servants won't dine on cold meat above twice a week, I know that," said Mrs. Courtenay. "But as to their dining after us, they would say they could not wait; they would leave first."

"Then they should leave—and with great pleasure, I should say," cried Aunt Clem. "It is of no consequence what time people dine, provided they have their regular hour; their appetite soon accustoms itself to it. You might dine at five instead of six or seven, and they after you. Annis's servants do, and she gets no grumbling."

"Well," said the Captain, carelessly, "we have rubbed on somehow, with all our mismanagement, and we must contrive to rub on still. Perhaps we shall give up our summer excursion this year, and that will be an economy. I am going down to the club for an hour. I shall find you here on my return, Aunt Clem: you'll stop and help us out with the minced veal."

"What a barbarous picture you do draw of domestic economy, Aunt Clem!" exclaimed Augusta as her husband quitted the room. "Ninepenny lace, and common home-made lawn shirts for babies, and all the house dining from one joint, and calling minced veal unprofitable! Your ideas are not suited to us; to the Captain."

"Child," answered Aunt Clem, "I am only thinking what is suited to your income. With seven hundred a-year you ought to be able to afford liberal housekeeping and expenditure; but it appears you have so many large expenses that the house must, or ought, of necessity, to suffer. Your husband hinted at debt; and indeed I don't see how he can have kept out of it."

"We are very much in debt ; though how much he will not tell me : he says it is enough for him to be worried over it, without my being so."

"Then why don't you curtail your expenditure, Augusta?"

"Curtil where? There is not one of the servants we could possibly do without : and I'm sure I try all I can to impress saving in the kitchen."

"There has been one fault throughout, Augusta. You began on the wrong scale : it is very easy to increase a scale of expenditure, but remarkably difficult to lessen it. The common mistake in marrying is, that people begin by living up to their income."

"After all, aunt, if I could curtail in petty domestic trifles, it would be of little service. It is the larger outlays that have hurt us : our going out of town, and our visiting, and my husband's private expenses. He cannot give up these expenses, unless he gives up his friends. Fancy Captain Courtenay being obliged to relinquish his club! It's not to be thought of. We must rub on, as he says, somehow or other."

"He does not seem to be rubbing on to his club now," said Aunt Clem, who was at the window. "He is standing to talk."

"And what queer-looking men he has got hold of!" uttered Augusta, following her. "Shabby coats and greasy hats. He is coming back, and they with him. What can they want?"

Aunt Clem drew in her lips ominously, but she said nothing. Mrs. Courtenay was only surprised, for the men had entered with her husband. She opened the room-door, and saw the Captain advancing to her with a white face.

"My dear Augusta—don't be alarmed, or—or—put out : Aunt Clem can tell you there's no occasion, for these trifles happen every day : but—I—am—arrested."

"Arrested!" shrieked Augusta, flying to cling to his arm. "Will they drag you off to prison?"

"For to-day I fear they must ; but——"

"Ain't no fear about it, sir," interposed one of the men, "it's certain. As well out with the truth, sir, to the lady ; it answers best with 'em."

"You'll stop here, and take care of her, Aunt Clem," said the crestfallen Captain, as Augusta burst into sobs ; "don't let her grieve. I daresay I shall get it all settled and be at home to-morrow."

"This comes of such folk as you rushing headlong into marriage!" tartly exclaimed Aunt Clem.

IV.

It had been a very blue look-out : Captain Courtenay once called it so, when he was examining his Christmas bills ; but that blue was *couleur de rose* compared with the deep blue of the look-out now.

Captain and Mrs. Courtenay had married upon seven hundred a-year and no further expectations. A sufficient sum for moderate tastes and moderate desires, but unfortunately neither the Captain nor his wife could stoop to these. A few years of extravagance, within doors and without, brought on a climax, and the Captain was civilly marshalled to prison in a cab. With some trouble, and at a considerable sacrifice, he succeeded, after a week's incarceration, in "arranging matters;" but to do so cost him far more than his improvidence had bargained for: his income was cut down three-sevenths, and would continue so docked for many years to come.

They left their house at Brompton: to economise there, in the very sight of their intimate friends and neighbours, would be too galling: and settled in a smaller one, with their children, four now, and two servants. Perhaps the most cruel point in the whole affair, to Mrs. Courtenay, was the being reduced to keeping only two, a nurse and maid-of-all-work. If she had despised one thing more than another in her sister's household, who had married for love, upon three hundred a-year, it was that useful but sometimes very troublesome appendage, a servant-of-all-work. The house they moved into was close to that of her sister, Mrs. Lance; and for some time after taking possession of it, Mrs. Courtenay chiefly spent her days in tears, and Captain Courtenay in sitting over the fire, with a pipe and a newspaper.

The poor Captain was really to be pitied. He had the misfortune to be an idle man, a man of no profession or occupation: and he had been obliged to give up his comfortable (and expensive) club, his opera, and his kid gloves. All his old habits, confirmed and strong, were rudely broken through, and instead of playing the dandy abroad, he gave way to the sulks at home.

It was not altogether a desirable home, for Mrs. Courtenay had no idea of management; the servants, scenting what sort of a mistress they had, showed less, and the young children tore about the house uncontrolled, destroying the peace of every room, and frequently coming to grief and screams. As to saving in the domestic details of housekeeping, Mrs. Courtenay had not the faintest conception how to begin, and the house remained a perpetual scene of worry and confusion.

One evening Mr. and Mrs. Lance were sitting together, after dinner, in the comfortable dining-room of their pleasant house. Not that their house was fine or large, but pleasant and comfortable it certainly was; for there were no storms in it, whether from parents, servants, or children, but there was well-ordered regularity. Their children—they had three—were with them now, but they were not trained to give way to wayward humours. Mr. Lance was a barrister, but briefless, and he had preferred accepting the secretaryship of a public institution, at three hundred a-year, to starving on expectation, in a wig and gown. Whilst they were talking, Mrs. Courtenay

was shown in, and down she immediately sat upon a chair and burst into tears. Mr. and Mrs. Lance approached her with surprise and commiseration ; and little Annie, the eldest child, was so aghast at the sight, that she backed against the wall, in doubt whether she should not set up a cry too.

"I am tired and worried out of my life, Annis," began Mrs. Courtenay to her sister. "All my efforts to be a good manager turn out wrong. I thought I would try and do the dinner to-day, for that servant of mine is so insolent and extravagant : I said there was enough mutton in the house for dinner, made into a haricot——"

"Do you mean an Irish stew?" interrupted Mrs. Lance.

"That's what vulgar people call it, Annis. Susan drew down the corners of her mouth, and said not if *she* made it ; so the remark nettled me, and I said I would do it myself. And I thought I did do it beautifully," added the unhappy lady, with a choking sob between every other word, "and when it came to be turned out it was all burnt black to the saucepan, and smelt like a dozen blankets on fire."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Mrs. Lance.

"So there was no dinner for any of us, and the Captain went out, swearing, with a bang that shook the ceilings, to get some where he could. Do give me a few lessons, Annis, and tell me how you manage—though I used to laugh at your ways. I'm afraid he'll swear at me next, and I should never survive that."

Mr. Lance rose from his chair and smiled. "It will all come right, Mrs. Courtenay, if you only have a little perseverance. Annis was a good manager from the first, but she is better now. And whilst you take your first lesson, I will go in to my friend Desborough : I was telling Annis, when you came, that I owed him a visit."

"I could not swallow a scrap of anything if you paid me. I'm too miserable," sobbed Mrs. Courtenay, interrupting her sister's hospitable intentions. "I will drink a cup of tea when you take yours."

"You shall have it directly, Augusta. The servants must have finished dinner by now, and the children shall go back to the nursery."

"Tell me exactly how you manage throughout the day, Annis," said Mrs. Courtenay, when they were alone. "I will try, in my own house, to imitate it."

"I manage much as I used to do in my early married days, only there is more to do," said Mrs. Lance. Mary gets up at six——"

"And my beauty crawls downstairs at eight," interrupted Mrs. Courtenay, in tones of wrath, "and the more I talk to her, the longer she lies ; and the nurse is worse."

"Those sort of servants would be useless in my house," said Annis. "We breakfast at eight, and I am out of bed before seven."

"What in the world do you get up so soon for? You, I mean. It is unnecessary to rise before seven for an eight o'clock breakfast."

"I find it none too early. I like to be neatly dressed; not to come downstairs 'a figure,' as it is called, in badly-arranged hair, or an untidy, ugly dressing-gown. Then I spare a few minutes for my private reading, and a minute for the nursery, for I do not choose Annie to slur over her little prayers to a careless nurse. I hope you always hear your children theirs, Augusta."

"I hear them now and then at night, if I have time; never in a morning; I don't think they say any. What do prayers matter for such little children?"

"The impressions made on young children last for ever, and they tend to good or to evil," remarked Annis in a low voice. "But let me go on. Annie breakfasts with us, the other two with nurse in the kitchen: that are too young for *that* to hurt them," she added in a meaning tone. "Afterwards, when Geoffrey is gone, I read to Annie for five minutes or so——"

"Read what?" asked Mrs. Courtenay in surprise. "Fairy tales?"

"Bible stories," answered Mrs. Lance gravely. "What would become of me, of them, if I did not strive to train my children to God? How should I answer for it hereafter? Then begins the business of the day. I occupy myself in the nursery and mind the children whilst nurse helps with the beds; and then——"

"Making yourself a nurse the first thing in the morning!" groaned Mrs. Courtenay. "I'm sure I can never bring myself to that."

"Everyone to their taste," laughed Annis. "I would rather be a nurse in the morning than in the evening. When the beds are made, nurse relieves me, and I go down and help Mary in the kitchen. Sometimes I wash the breakfast-things, and make a pudding; sometimes I iron the fine things: in short, I do what there is to do of the work I have apportioned to myself. By eleven or twelve o'clock, as it may happen, it is all done, and I am at liberty for the day; to sit down in the drawing-room to my sewing, and chat with any friends who may call to see me. Useful sewing now, Augusta," she laughed; "no longer embroidery, or drawing, or painting, or wax flowers."

"Have you given up all those pleasant recreations?"

"I really fear I have. I find no time for them. I make all my children's things, and part of my own and my husband's. On washing-days I am in the nursery until dinner-time, and we always, that day, have a cold dinner, that both servants may help. You see I manage as I used to, and it is only repeating what I have told you before."

"You do seem to have such super-excellent servants!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenay, in sarcastic tones.

"Yes, I have very good ones. Servants are much cried out against, and no doubt some are good and some are bad, but they should be carefully chosen before admitted to the house, and I think that a good mistress generally meets with good servants. I do not

mean that mine are faultless : it would indeed be a miracle : but they know they are well off with me ; for though I am resolute in having their duties thoroughly performed, I am a considerate mistress, anxious for their own comfort and welfare."

"And you never have but one dinner. Aunt Clem went on so to me once, in the other house, about my having two dinners, one for ourselves and another for the servants. She called it waste."

"It is so," answered Mrs. Lance ; "both of time and provisions. The children have theirs in the middle of the day : they are too young to wait, but that is not much trouble. A rice pudding, perhaps, and a little steak or mutton chops : the baby does not eat meat yet."

"But my servants grumble my life out when I order only one dinner : it was my saying they must wait to-day, and dine after us, that put Susan out about the meat."

"I do not wonder at it : with such irregularity, which to them must appear like caprice, how can you expect cheerful obedience ? Let them understand, once for all, that they dine after you, and if they persist in being discontented, the best plan will be to change."

"Change ! I am always changing : you know I am, Annis. And then the taking out the children—oh, the worry it is ! Of course I am not going streaming out with them, and Susan can't go and leave the work, so I hire a girl, the greengrocer's daughter, and give her sixpence a time ; but the nurse does not choose to approve of it, and says she is more worry than help."

"Ah, we are well off in that respect," said Mrs. Lance, with animation. "We have no right to the square, not absolutely living in it, but somehow we are popular in the neighbourhood, and have had a key given to us. It is so useful : the nurse goes there with all three children, and can sit down with the baby whilst Annie and the boy run about."

"All things seem to turn up well for you," rejoined Mrs. Courtenay, querulously. "I'm sure they don't for most people. I wish I could get a key of the square."

"I think that when people set their faces resolutely to their duty and strive to make the best of it, humbly trusting to *be helped* in it, that many things do turn up for them quite wonderfully," answered Mrs. Lance gently.

"Annis ! the idea of your mixing up religious notions with the petty concerns of life ! It is quite methodistical."

"Rather high church, of the two, I fancy," responded Annis, good-humouredly. "But rely upon it, Augusta, that until people have learnt to remember that God's eye is upon them in all the trifles of daily life, they have not learnt how to live."

"You harp, too, upon 'system' and 'regularity.' I know I shall never learn to practise either."

"But you must ; for the comfort of a family mainly depends upon that. At five, whilst we dine, the children take their tea in the

nursery, and when we have finished, they come to us while the servants dine. By seven, the children are in bed."

"And then you sit stitching away here all the evening!" said Mrs. Courtenay.

"Very often I do, and Geoffry reads to me: the newspaper, or our periodicals. And nurse does her part to the stitching in the nursery."

"Such a humdrum, Darby-and-Joan sort of life!"

"We would not change it for yours, Augusta," laughed Annis. "But I do not work always: sometimes I read, or we play at chess, or cribbage, and now and then a friend drops in, or we drop in to a friend's. Believe me, we are thoroughly happy and contented. I told mamma I knew we could manage well on three hundred a-year, and we have done so, and are fully satisfied. All of you, except papa, have spoken scornfully of my lowering myself to two servants, and one of those a nurse, but I have more regularity and comfort in my house than you had with your four. No one who comes here sees them otherwise than perfectly neat and tidy; for both of the servants understand that were they to appear otherwise they must look out for fresh situations."

"Do your servants have meat at luncheon?"

"Never. They have it at one meal only—dinner. They take as much as they please then. Believe me, Augusta, we have no stinting in necessities, though we cannot afford luxuries."

"You are not too luxurious in dress, that's certain," said Mrs. Courtenay, looking at her sister's ruby merino; "and yet, it really looks well," she added, "with its pretty fringe trimmings."

"Quite as well, for a home dress, as your rich silk, Augusta. Especially with that great splash of grease down the front."

"Splash of grease!" echoed Mrs. Courtenay, hastily casting her eyes on her dress, and beholding a broad running stain. "There! I must have done that to-day, meddling with that abominable cooking."

"You surely did not do your cooking in that dress!" exclaimed the younger sister.

"What else could I do it in?" fretfully retorted Mrs. Courtenay. "I could not be in a shabby wrapper at two or three o'clock in the day, when people might be calling."

"I would not be seen in either, at any time, Augusta. But there's the advantage of getting over these domestic tasks early in the day. You should have a large apron to put on in the kitchen, as I do."

"To save that dress?" sarcastically asked Augusta Courtenay, who was in a thorough ill-temper.

"No, this is not my morning dress," quietly returned her sister. "That is only alpaca. But it is nicely made, not a 'wrapper' or a 'loose jacket,' and is neither dirty nor shabby."

"How do you make soup," pursued Mrs. Courtenay, ignoring the

implied reproof. "Susan sends up ours all water, and the Captain can't eat it; although she has four pounds of meat to make it with, which looks boiled to rags, fit only to throw away."

"Oh, Augusta! four pounds of meat wasted in soup! You will never economise at that rate. Poor people—as, perhaps, I may venture to call you now, with ourselves—should never attempt expensive soups. For them it is waste of money."

"I am sure I have heard *you* talk of having soup often enough," angrily returned Mrs. Courtenay.

"Yes; soups that cost nothing; or next to nothing."

"Like that parsonage soup!" cried Mrs. Courtenay, bursting into laughter. "Do you remember, Annis? You came home from one of your visits at Aunt Ruttley's boasting of some delicious, cheap soup; and when mamma inquired how this delicious cheap soup was made, you said of young pea-shells. It remained a standing joke against you. Is that how your soups are made?"

"No. Winter is not the season for pea-shells. But I suppose what I am going to say to you will appear quite as much of a joke. We rarely make our pea-soup of anything but bones."

"Bones!" repeated Mrs. Courtenay, as much astonished as if her sister had said feathers.

"We never waste a bone. Beef-bones, mutton-bones, all, in short, are boiled, and boiled long, for about twelve hours; they stand by the side of the kitchen fire, not monopolising it; with an onion or two, a turnip, a carrot, and celery. It is all strained off, and the next morning is in a jelly. The peas are then boiled in it, with some mint, and it is an excellent soup. Then sometimes we have French soup, as we call it. That poor French governess, whom I invited to stay with me when she lost her situation, taught Mary how to make it. She used to make it for herself on Fridays, and say she preferred it to fish. I thought at first she said it out of delicacy, to prevent my going to the expense of fish for her, but I believed afterwards that she really did prefer it. It was a treat to her, for she never had it in England."

"What soup is it?"

"The French call it *soupe maigre*. On fast days they put a piece of butter into a saucepan, on other days a piece of dripping, let it melt, and put into it a quantity of vegetables ready cut in small pieces, carrots, turnips, leeks, and potatoes. They stir all these about over the fire, till they are well saturated with the dripping or butter, but not to brown them, then fill up the saucepan with water, and let it boil for two or three hours, adding pepper and salt to taste. You cannot think what a nice soup it makes."

"I am willing to take your word for it," returned Mrs. Courtenay, with an ungracious accent. "French soup made of dripping, and pea-soup made of bones! I wonder what the Captain would say if I placed such before him?"

"If placed before him well made, he would say they were excellent," was the rejoinder of Annis. "My husband thinks them so, and it is not necessary to proclaim your mysteries of economy over the dinner table. Both these soups are very grateful on a cold winter's day. Besides," she laughed, "they save the meat; my servants like these soups so much now that they often make their dinner of them, and will put away the meat untouched. Augusta," broke off Mrs. Lance, in a changed tone, "if you are to despise every word I say, as I see you do, why come to me for information?"

"No, I do not despise your words, Annis; I am obliged to you for being at the trouble to explain to me; but I cannot help despising the cookery; the odd, parsimonious way of concocting soups out of nothing. It is so ridiculous."

"Had I begun life upon the income you did, Augusta, I daresay I should never have learnt these frugal odds and ends of cookery. But I can testify that they are very helpful, both to comfort and to the purse; and if those who enjoy only my confined income do not understand them, or have them practised in their household, they ought to do so."

"What ought pies to be made of?" interrupted Mrs. Courtenay, remembering another domestic stumbling-block.

"Many things. Apples, and rhubarb, and——"

"Nonsense, Annis! You know I mean the crust."

"No, I did not. I make mine of lard. Sometimes of beef dripping."

"Beef drip——Well, what next? You must have learnt that at the parsonage."

"No, indeed, the parsonage was not rich enough to possess dripping. If by good luck it did have any, the children used to scramble for it to spread on their bread. Well clarified, it makes a very fair crust. But I generally use lard."

"Susan won't use anything but the best fresh butter; such a quantity; about a pound and a half to every pie."

"Make them yourself, Augusta."

"I can't; no one can eat them. I tried my hand at three or four, and they were as hard as lead, and could not be cut into: you might throw them from here to York, and they'd never break. But all these things are nothing to the washing; that's dreadful. I have taken to have most of it done at home, for the expense was ruinous, and the servants would not so much as wash out a duster. Every Monday morning a woman comes——"

"You should have it done on Tuesday," interrupted Annis, "and the clothes should be soaped and put in soak on Monday morning: they come clean with half the labour. And every fortnight would be often enough."

"They seem not to come clean at all in our house," groaned

Mrs. Courtenay. "I tell Susan she must help the woman, but I believe all the help she gives is gossip. Three days every week is that washerwoman with us, and she has two shillings a day, and eats enough to last her until she comes again the next week, and the house is in a steam and a warfare all three days, for they won't keep the doors shut, and the servants won't iron or fold, saying they have no time, and the things go to the mangling woman in the rough, and she folds them and charges double pay, and they come home as wet as water, and lie about for days, to be aired. Altogether, the clothes don't get put away till the Monday comes round again."

"I could not live in such a house!" exclaimed Annis. "We wash every other Tuesday, as I tell you, and by Thursday night the things are in the drawers, except what may want mending."

"You must have Aladdin's lamp. How do you manage it?"

"Management and system; with, of course, industry. Unless you can bring these to bear in your house, Augusta, it will be the same scene of confusion for ever. How uncomfortable it must make your husband."

"It makes him very cross, if you mean that. It is all confusion; no comfort and no peace."

Mrs. Courtenay had good cause to say so, and the confusion grew more confused as time went on. She made strenuous efforts, to the best of her ability, to remedy it, but succeed she could not. She constantly changed her servants, she made sudden plunges, by fits and starts, into the arts of cooking and contriving, but the only results were the spoiling of provisions, the waste of money, short commons, and ill-temper on all sides. Her husband took refuge again in his club for society, sheerly driven out of his house, which augmented expenses greatly.

V.

CAPTAIN COURTENAY sat one summer's morning in his stockings, the image of patience, looking at a very untidy breakfast cloth, and wishing he could also look at some breakfast; and two children were flying about the room, their hands full of bread-and-butter, which was being shared between their mouths and the carpet.

"It's too bad, Augusta," said he, as his wife came in: "twenty minutes past ten, and the breakfast not up. What's she at?"

"Leisurely eating her own breakfast, and the nurse with her," replied Mrs. Courtenay; "and the only answer I can get from her is that the kettle don't bile, and she ain't the fire to make it bile sooner than it will."

"That is always the excuse," sighed poor Captain Courtenay. "No breakfast, because there's no boiling water. What does she do in a morning? Be still can't you, Bob."

"She makes their own breakfast first, and then fills the kettle up again to boil for us. It's of no use talking to her: she is getting insolent already, and has been here but ten days. There's not a thing touched yet, and the kitchen is as she left it last night."

"I want my boots."

"There's not a boot or shoe cleaned. Why don't you put on your slippers?"

"Because I can't find them. Bob, where was it you saw my slippers?"

"In the oven, papa, all burnt up. We wondered what it was smelt so yesterday, and when Harriet looked in the oven, it was the slippers."

"Who put them there?" angrily demanded Mrs. Courtenay.

"I don't know," answered Bob. "Harriet said she didn't. Perhaps it was the boggy."

"Hallo!" cried out the Captain. "Who, sir?"

"The boggy, papa."

"Who tells you anything about the boggy?"

"Liza does. When Emily and Freddy won't go to sleep, 'Liza goes and calls the boggy. He made us scream so the other night, when he began to walk along the passage to fetch us."

"This is infamous!" uttered Captain Courtenay to his wife. "Nothing can be so bad as frightening children; they may never entirely overget its effects. Augusta, if any servant in the house dare to frighten my children she shall go out of it, so inquire into this. Why don't you see after things better?"

"I am seeing after things from morning till night, I think," retorted Mrs. Courtenay, who had not been downstairs ten minutes.

"And 'Liza'—what a pronunciation! Where do they pick it up?"

"Oh, from the servants," replied Mrs. Courtenay, apathetically. "Eliza herself speaks badly."

"I *cannot* make it out," exclaimed poor Captain Courtenay in an impassioned but helpless tone; "no other family seems to have such servants as we get. They do nothing; they are troublesome in all ways. Look at those two children: the buttons off their shoes, their socks dirty, their pinafores in holes, their hair uncombed! Bob; Emily; have you been washed this morning?"

"No," was the children's answer; "'Liza doesn't wash us till she takes us out in the day. It doesn't matter, she says."

The breakfast came in at last. And in discussing the merits of a capital ham (actually boiled well, by some mistake) the Captain grew pleasant and talkative.

"We had a snug party at the club last night, and a famous rubber. I cut in three times."

"Did you win?" inquired his wife.

"No," said the Captain, lugubriously. "I lost eleven points."

"Which was eleven shillings out of your pocket, and we can't afford it. You ought not to go there so much."

"Then you should make the house habitable."

"I don't make it uninhabitable, Robert: it's these wretches of servants."

"It's something," said the Captain. "By the way," he added, a recollection coming over him, "Ord has returned, and was there. He is coming to dine with us to-day."

"Oh! How could you ask him, Robert? Such a fuss and trouble as it will be."

"He asked himself; said he wanted to see you and the children. Nothing pleases you, Augusta. I go out too much, you say; and I am not to have a friend here: what am I to do? Sit in this room all day and all night, counting my fingers, while you storm at the ill-doings in the kitchen?"

"If my servants were worth anything I would not mind who came; but I suspect if we give Harriet two things to cook, she'll spoil one."

"Ord will take us as he finds us.—*Will* you children be quiet?—He knows it is not with us as it used to be, and he is a good fellow. A bit of fish and a joint: it's all we need have."

"No fish, no fish," hastily cried Mrs. Courtenay. "Remember that piece of salmon on Sunday: she sent it up in rags, on a bare dish, and all the scales on. I'll get some soup instead."

"Very well. Friday: it's not a very good day for choice, but I'll go out and cater for you, as I walk to the club. I am going directly after breakfast."

The result of the Captain's catering proved to be a piece of meat for soup, some lamb chops, a couple of fine ducks, green peas, asparagus, and young potatoes.

"The ducks must be stuffed, Harriet," observed Mrs. Courtenay, "and you must make a nice gravy for them."

"The gravy falls from 'em in roasting, don't it?" was Harriet's response.

"No," wrathfully returned Mrs. Courtenay; "don't you know better than that? It must be a made gravy, and a very good one."

"That'll make another saucepan on the fire," cried Harriet; "I must have the range out as wide as he'll go. It'll be a bother to get them feathers off the wings."

"What!" uttered Mrs. Courtenay, the remark causing her to look round hastily at the ducks. And then she saw that the inexperienced Captain had not ordered them to be made ready for dressing, but had bought and sent them home just as they were displayed in the poulterer's shop, part of their feathers on, and their heads hanging down.

"If ever I saw anything so stupid in all my life!" uttered she in her vexation. "And we don't know where they were bought, to send them back to be done. You must draw and truss them, Harriet."

"Never drew no animal in my life, and don't know how to do it," promptly returned Harriet.

Neither did Mrs. Courtenay know. And she foresaw the day would have some perplexity. Harriet suggested that Mrs. Brown should come in, and her mistress eagerly caught at it: so the children were left to the mercies of the stairs, like Mrs. Jellyaby's Peepy, whilst Eliza was sent flying round the neighbourhood in search of Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown was the weekly washerwoman, and the two servants were on very good terms with her.

"Do you know how to prepare ducks for roasting?" was the anxious question Mrs. Courtenay put to her, when she returned with Eliza.

"Please, mem, I've seen 'em done. I can't say as I've had a deal of experience in such-like. But in the matter of scouring out of saucepans, and putting on of coal, and getting ready of plates and dishes, and scraping of potatoes, and shelling of peas, and all them odd jobs, there ain't nobody more quicker nor handier than me."

"Me and Mrs. Brown will manage well between us, ma'am," said Harriet. "Don't you stop here, please, for you'll only put us out. Now as I have got her to do the rough part, I be bound I'll do the fine."

Mrs. Courtenay was but too willing to accede to this advice. She hated the kitchen, and was always as thankful to get out of it as monks tell us poor erring souls are to get out of purgatory. So, with numerous charges and directions, the latter somewhat obscure, owing to her own inexperience, she left them to it, and did not go down again, passing a very agreeable day chatting with some acquaintance who called, and devouring a new novel.

Late in the afternoon she was surprised by a visit from her old maiden aunt, Miss Clementina Marsh, whom she had not seen for twelve months, and who had come to pass a few days with Mrs. Lance.

"Now you must stay and dine with me, Aunt Clem. I shall be glad of you, for Major Ord is coming, and you will make the fourth at table."

"I am agreeable," answered Aunt Clem. "Annis has sent me to ask you to her house to tea. Your mamma is there, and the Doctor is coming in the evening. I told Annis perhaps I should dine with you, and bring you in afterwards."

"Then come upstairs, and take your things off."

"Why, what's this?" uttered Aunt Clem, as she followed her niece to her bedroom. "Half-past four in the day, and your bed not made!"

"Oh! Harriet must have forgotten all about the upstairs work, and I'm sure I did. It must go now until after dinner. She is a fresh servant, aunt, and she knows little about cooking, and the woman that's helping her seems to know less. It is of no use seeking

for good cooks in servants-of-all-work, and they plague one's life out."

"Your nurse might do the bedrooms on busy days," said Aunt Clem.

"She might, but she doesn't. She is out now with the children. We have a key of the square, like Annis, and she takes the whole tribe there, and I get a quiet hour indoors."

They were to dine at five, early hours suiting Major Ord; and a few minutes before the hour he and the Captain were heard to enter.

"Where are they going?" cried Augusta, in dismay. "Never upstairs, to wash their hands! My goodness me! can Robert be taking him up to that untidy room!"

"I should hope not," cried Aunt Clem: "it set my teeth of order on edge. There's no water, and no clean towels, and the hot-water jug, and razor, and shaving paper, are on the dressing-table, as your husband must have left them this morning, and the bed's just as you left it, and the room in a shocking litter altogether."

"They are gone in there! Robert's as senseless as an owl."

"I think it's someone else who's senseless," significantly retorted Aunt Clem. "How could he suppose the room had not been put to rights?"

"Hark! he is going for water to the nursery: Eliza keeps a pitcher there. What will Major Ord think of it all?"

"Some water," roared out the Captain; "there's none anywhere." Mrs. Courtenay rang the bell in a tremor, and Harriet was heard to go up.

The gentlemen came down. The Major was a pleasant man, much older than Captain Courtenay. He had plenty to tell Mrs. Courtenay of his sojourn abroad, and was in the midst of it, when a crash startled them from the kitchen. Something had gone.

"It sounds like a dish," laughed the Captain. "I hope our dinner was not in it."

Half-past five, and no signs of dinner. "Had you not better step and see what they are about?" cried out old-fashioned Aunt Clem to her niece.

"Oh, dear, no," coldly replied Augusta, too much the fine lady to do so in the sight of the Major. "They do not like to be interfered with."

A little more suspense, and then there came a timid knock to the room door.

"Come in."

"Please, gentlefolks, the dinner's a-waiting."

A cold shiver ran right through Mrs. Courtenay, as the Major held out his arm. For it occurred to her that she had said nothing to Harriet about who was to wait, and that voice was Mrs. Brown's. Could Harriet be sending that fright of a woman into the dining-room, and be stopping herself in the kitchen?

It was so. Screwing herself right behind the door, in her timidity, was humble Mrs. Brown. A pale, half-starved woman, with thin cheeks, and a black beard. A white apron of Harriet's was tied over the corners of her shawl and her patched gown, and a calico cap on her head, with a wide-spreading calico border that flew up as she moved. On the table, where the soup ought to have been, was a large plated dish-cover, completely covering what might be underneath, and resting on the tablecloth.

The Captain was speechless. He looked at Mrs. Brown, he looked at the cover, and he looked at his wife; and his wife would have been thankful not to look anywhere, but to sink through the floor or escape up the chimney. But they took their seats, Mrs. Brown drew up, and Aunt Clem volunteered grace, during the Captain's maze.

"Please, sir, am I to take off the kiver?"

"What is the meaning of this?" ejaculated the Captain, unable to contain himself any longer.

He probably meant Mrs. Brown. She thought otherwise. She lifted the "kiver," and disclosed a pie-dish containing the soup.

"Please, gentlefolks, we had a misfortin and broke the tureen: but it's only in three pieces, and can be riveted."

"Where's Harriet?" fiercely demanded Captain Courtenay.

"Please, sir, she's in the kitchen."

"Go down there, and send her up."

Mrs. Brown went down: but Mrs. Brown came up again.

"Please, gentlefolks, Harriet haven't a-cleaned of herself, and she's rather black. Please, as soon as she have dished up her ducks and chops, she says she'll wash her hands and face, and come."

Poor Mrs. Courtenay's face wanted washing—washing with some cooling lotion, to allay its fever heat. The Captain, helpless and crestfallen, served out the soup.

"What soup d'ye call this?" unceremoniously asked Aunt Clem at the first spoonful.

"Vermicelli soup," replied Mrs. Courtenay.

"Are you sure it is not made of coffee-berries?" returned Aunt Clem.

Whether the soup was made of water, or grease, or coffee-berries, no one could tell; but it was like a mixture of all three.

"If these are not coffee-berries, I never saw coffee-berries," persisted Aunt Clem, striking her spoon against sundry hard brown substances in her plate.

"They *are* coffee-berries," uttered the perplexed Captain.

"Please, gentlefolks, when Harriet was a-going to put in the vermisilli, she laid hold on the wrong paper, and the coffee-berries slipped in afore she found out her mistake," explained Mrs. Brown. "There was no time to fish 'em out again."

Apart from the coffee-berries, the soup was uneatable, and the spoons were laid down. "Take it away," said the Captain.

So Mrs. Brown carried away the pie-dish, and upon returning to remove the respective plates, she asked first, individually, "Please, had they done with it?"

"Never mind, Mrs. Courtenay," said Major Ord, good-humouredly; "misfortunes will happen, you know, in the best regulated family. I am an old traveller, and think nothing of them."

"Let us hope what's coming will be better," observed the Captain. "And we'll try the wine meanwhile, Major."

What was coming was tolerably long in coming, and Mrs. Courtenay grew hotter; but when it did come, it came in triumph. Harriet (in clean hands and face) bearing one dish, and Mrs. Brown another, and then both returned for the vegetables. The Major gently rubbed his hands, and the covers were removed.

"Lamb chops, and ducks, Major," said Mrs. Courtenay. "We made no stranger of you."

Which were the chops and which were the ducks? The dish before Mrs. Courtenay appeared to contain a mass of something as black as pitch. It was the chops, burnt to a coal. That was unpardonable of Harriet, for she could cook chops well. "I fear I cannot recommend the chops," said the miserable hostess, "but I think I can the ——"

Mrs. Courtenay came to a dead standstill. For upon looking towards the ducks she was struck by the extraordinary appearance they presented. The Captain was also gazing upon them with open mouth, and Aunt Clem was putting on her spectacles for a better view.

"What d'ye call them?" asked Aunt Clem. "They must be some foreign-shaped creatures from abroad."

"Harriet, are those the ducks?" uttered Mrs. Courtenay.

They were the ducks, but——

"If I don't believe they have been cooked with their heads on!" interrupted Aunt Clem. "And those things sticking up in the air are the beaks, and those four things are their eyes. My gracious, girl!" turning sharply round to Harriet, "did you ever see ducks cooked with their heads on before?"

The heads had been elevated, in an ingenious way, by means of upright skewers, with, as Aunt Clem expressed it, the beak sticking up. The feet were sticking up also, and spread out like fans. Harriet made her escape from the room.

"They won't eat the worse for it," said Major Ord, good-naturedly; and the Captain proceeded to carve them in the best manner he could, considering the array of skewers.

"Stuffing, Major?"

"If you please. It is called a vulgar taste, I believe, but I plead guilty to liking it."

"So do I, sir," said Aunt Clem, fixing her spectacles on the Major's face, "and I hope I never shall shrink from avowing it,

though the world does seem to be turning itself topsy-turvy, aping after what it calls refinement. A duck without the sage and onions wouldn't be a duck to me."

"Nor to me either, ma'am," said the Major.

"What very extraordinary stuffing!" uttered Aunt Clem, who was the first helped. "What's it made of?" continued she, sniffing and tasting.

"Made of!" hesitated the unhappy Mrs. Courtenay.

"Please, gentlefolks, it's chiefly made of suet, with thyme and parsley and crumbled bread and pepper and salt," spoke up Mrs. Brown.

"Fortune be good to us!" uttered Aunt Clem; "why, that's a veal stuffing. Ducks are stuffed with sage and onions."

"Please, gentlefolks, I told Harriet I had seen 'em done with sage and onions, and she asked if I thought I knowed better than her."

"Will you have any of it, Major?" inquired the Captain, very quietly, in his mortification.

"Well, I don't know. How will it taste?"

The vegetables would have been very good had they been done, but the peas were as hard as the coffee-berries, and the grass, as Aunt Clem called it, had never been untied from the bundle in which it was bought. The young potatoes were in a mash. They were trying to make a dinner, when a *divertissement* occurred: the children, returning home from their walk, burst into the room, and, undisciplined and wilful as they were, could only be got rid of by force, the Captain being obliged to rise from table and assist in the ejection, whilst their screams frightened the visitor and deafened Aunt Clem. Poor Captain Courtenay almost swore a mental oath that he would run away to Africa with morning light.

"Oh, Aunt Clem! did ever anything go so unfortunately?" burst forth Mrs. Courtenay, in a shower of agonising tears, the moment she escaped from the dining-room. "What is to be done? What will Major Ord think of me, as the mistress of such a household—such housekeeping?"

"He will think you are an idiot," was the complimentary reply of Aunt Clem. "And so do I. I am going to Mrs. Lance now: it is late."

"I'll go with you," feverishly uttered Augusta. "I cannot stay here and face my husband and the Major at coffee."

"Caution: the kitchen first, then, that they don't make the coffee of vermicelli," retorted Aunt Clem.

The peaceful home of her sister Annis, everything so quiet and orderly, was like a haven of rest, after her own, to Mrs. Courtenay. Dr. and Mrs. Marsh were there, but Mr. Lance had not returned from town, to the extreme surprise, if not alarm, of his wife, for he was always punctual. He soon came in, and Captain Courtenay with him, Major Ord having pleaded an evening engagement.

"We cannot go on like this," cried the Captain, suppressing his temper, as he looked at his sobbing wife, who had been detailing her grievances. "Where lies the fault; and what is to be done?"

"I think the fault lies in Augusta's incapacity for management," said Dr. Marsh, "and——"

"Oh, papa," she sobbed, "you don't know how I have tried to learn."

"And in your being unable, both of you, to accommodate yourselves to your reduced income," he added. "Augusta, child, you interrupted me. It is now four hundred a-year: but with all your discomfort you must be exceeding it."

"Four hundred won't cover our expenses this year," answered the Captain gloomily.

An ominous pause ensued: all present felt that such prospects were not bright ones. Aunt Clem broke it with a groan.

"Courtenay," observed the Doctor, "your club and your out-door luxuries must be incompatible with your means."

"I can't *live* without my club," interrupted the Captain, in earnest accents: "I must have some refuge from such a home as mine. And how to spend less in any one point than we do is more than I can tell; or Augusta either, I believe. Lance—Annis—why don't you teach us your secret?"

"Ah, we began at the right end," laughed Mr. Lance; "we economised at first, and it is now pleasant to us. We have had to practise self-denial patiently, to bear and forbear: but we have every wished-for comfort, and are happy."

"And you seem to live well, and you sometimes have a friend to dine with you, Lance," cried the Captain.

"To be sure. We do not exclude ourselves to ourselves like hermits."

"And he does not get soup made of grease and coffee-berries, and ducks roasted with their heads on, and stuffed with suet; and a she-animal in a beard and a shawl to wait upon him!" grumbled the Captain; which sent Mr. Lance into an explosion of laughter, for he had not heard of the mishaps of the day.

"It is of no use to mince the matter," cried Aunt Clem to the Captain and his wife, in her most uncompromising voice. "You two never ought to have married; you are not fitted by nature for a limited income, and turn its inconveniences into pleasures. What's more, you never will: you will go on in this miserable way for ever: and what will be the end of it, I don't know."

There was another pause: for Aunt Clem's words were true, and could not be gainsaid.

"I wish I had your occupation, Lance; or some other," exclaimed the Captain.

"I wish you had, indeed. An idle man needs to have a pocket full of money."

"But, Lance," mused the Captain, "you must have brought a strong will to bear down your old habits when you married Annis."

"Yes: and as strong a conscience," replied Mr. Lance, in low tones. "We both deliberated well upon what we were going to do, and we felt that we could go through with it, and succeed. It is difficult for men, brought up in expensive habits, as you and I were, Courtenay, to subdue them effectually, and become quiet members of society, men of reflection, good husbands and fathers, and remain so, without a struggle. Temptations to relapse beset on all sides; and few find out the right way, and acquire the inward strength to resist them. But if it is found, and acquired, the struggle soon ceases, and all the rest is easy."

"But you will never find it out, Captain," exclaimed Aunt Clem; "you and Augusta are of the wrong sort. Geoffry and Annis set out in the practise of self-denial: Annis in the shape of dress, visiting and gaiety, and Geoffry in that of out-door society. Annis, too, had the knack of domestic economy; Augusta had not; and there's a great deal in that. Some are born with it, and others seem as if they can never acquire it, try as they will."

"And what will you do for money, when your children want educating, Augusta?" asked Mrs. Marsh.

"I'm sure I don't know, mamma," was the helpless answer.

"We are putting by for that," said Annis.

"Putting by, out of three hundred a-year!" ejaculated Captain Courtenay.

"A little," she replied. "And the first year or two of our marriage we were enabled to put by really a great deal. But it causes me many an anxious thought, for I know how expensive education is."

"We shall weather it, Annis," said her husband.

"Yes," she sighed, "I hope we shall. And I believe we shall," she added, more cheerfully: "I never lose my trust, except in some wrong moment of despondency. Augusta has made me look on the dark side of things to-night."

"I know we shall," Mr. Lance replied, gazing at her with a meaning smile and a bright eye. "The half-yearly meeting of the institution took place to-day, and the governors had me before them, said some civil things to me, and raised my salary. It was what I never expected."

"Raised your salary!" she eagerly uttered.

"One hundred a-year, and intimated that by-and-by they might do more."

"Oh, Geoffry!" The tears rushed into her eyes in spite of herself. It was such a reward—for their patient perseverance *had* been attended with rubs and crosses. All fears for the future seemed at an end.

"Let me congratulate you, Lance," cried the Captain, heartily. "You can launch out a little more now."

"Launch out," returned Mr. Lance, with a glance at his wife, which she well understood. "Is it to be so, Annis?"

"I think not," she said, with a happy smile. "We are quite contented as we are, and will put it by for our children."

"You'll be geese if you don't," sharply cried Aunt Clem. "What could you want to launch out in, I should like to know, beyond what you have? A coach and four?"

"They have learnt the secret," said Dr. Marsh, nodding to the company. "Lance and Annis are happy on their three hundred a-year, for they confine their desires within their income: if you, Courtenay, and Augusta, came into five thousand a-year to-morrow, you would be sure to go beyond it. They conform their wants to their circumstances: you can't; and, as Aunt Clem says, you never will. And——"

"Never," put in Aunt Clem.

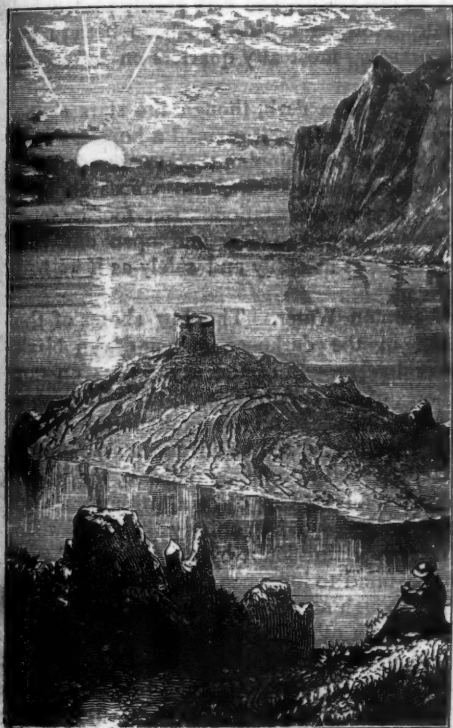
"And there lies all the difference," concluded the Doctor.

There it does all lie. And the expediency, or in expediency, of frugal marriages can never be satisfactorily settled: for where one couple will go on and flourish, bravely surmounting their difficulties, another will come to repentance, poverty, and embarrassment, and a third live, in private, after the proverbially happy manner of a cat and dog. It does not lie altogether in the previous habits, or in the education, or in the disposition, still less in the previous station of life: it lies far more in the capacity of the husband and the wife, both, being able to adapt themselves cheerfully, and hopefully, and perseveringly to their circumstances: and few will be able to tell whether or not they can so adapt themselves, until they try it; whether the irrevocable step will turn out for better, or for worse.



A WEEK IN JERSEY.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.



PORTALET BAY.

WE had heard a great deal of the spring charms of Jersey, and having a week or ten days to spare, determined to "go and see for ourselves." H. had not been to the Channel Islands at all; I had; and the one was as glad to revisit old scenes and renew old impressions as the other was to form new ones. It says much for Jersey that the pleasure of my second stay exceeded anything I had experienced in my first: partly, perhaps, because the earlier visit had been paid in autumn, when the leaves are falling and the world is sad. In this later visit we were in the midst of all the exquisite love-

liness and exhilaration of reviving nature.

We left London one bright afternoon in May. Even the skies of the Metropolis were blue, and Waterloo Station was not quite so depressing as usual. In due time we reached Southampton; and again could not quite decide whether it is one of the ugliest places in England, or rather picturesque and interesting. On the whole, the ugliness seems to predominate.

Our boat left at ten o'clock. The year being young, the season early, we anticipated no difficulty in regard to accommodation. Yet

we found every private cabin taken, and the public saloon likely to be crowded. This was a check to our hitherto uninterrupted flow of spirits. H. looked at me rather blankly. The look said plainly: "Let us delay our journey until to-morrow." But delays are dangerous, and the secret of success in life is to overcome obstacles. A whole night spent in a crowded saloon, with a table groaning under the weight of refreshments that probably we should presently be wishing might be "funeral baked meats," was out of the question. Finally, the captain came to our rescue, and very kindly placed his own cabin at our disposal. Nothing could have been better; we now rejoiced in the best, quietest, most airy quarters on board the good ship.

We started at ten. The night was dark, though the stars shone brilliantly. As we loosed our moorings, it seemed a hopeless task to find a passage through the maze of shipping that surrounded us. Lights flashed and gleamed from all quarters, and voices shouted and raved as if in the last stage of desperation. But foot by foot, and yard by yard, our pathway seemed to clear and open out, and we glided away into broader waters as easily and safely as if we had been all the time in mid-ocean.

We passed out of Southampton Water. The low shores of the Isle of Wight loomed out in the darkness, a long-drawn black line against the still darker background of the sky. This on our right. On our left, the shores of the mainland, with its innumerable lights, gave token of life and movement and the habitations of man. Ahead, the broad waters of the Channel bid us advance. We turned in before long, and the night passed in a happy oblivion, for which we were grateful—doubly grateful to the captain, without whose kindly aid the hours would have passed in misery. As we woke simultaneously the next morning: no doubt by the action of that mesmeric affinity which causes mind to influence mind: a mysterious power which certainly exists, though as yet so little understood: as we woke, I say, and gazed at each other inquiringly, each saw there was no heartrending tale of agony and woe to confess to. Our berths were at right angles to each other, and H., who is six feet in his stockings, had passed the night mysteriously curled up like a marmoset or a squirrel. I, on the other hand, had profited by the circumstance which has so often served a man on the battle-field, not only of life but of war, of being a head shorter than his next-door neighbour.

We looked out and found that we were in sight of land and rocks. A fresh, exhilarating breeze was blowing, and before long we stood on the bridge, which we shared with the officers on duty. In answer to a magic knob in the cabin, the steward brought us tea, and we felt, like Alexander, eager for a new world to conquer.

We steamed down the coast of Jersey, and once more were struck by all its diversity of outline and beauty of colouring. The

crescent bays, small and lovely, opened up one after another. The water was exquisitely green and transparent. The sun had risen in splendour, and his broad beams flashed and sparkled around. Every moment the air seemed to grow softer and warmer; the skies were blue and cloudless. The sense of exhilaration made life a paradise for the moment.

Presently the harbour of St. Heliers opened up; we passed the grey, disused fortress of Elizabeth Castle, which stands out so picturesquely from the mainland—an island at high water, a continent when the tide is low. The lofty granite rock on which Fort Regent was built, at the cost of a million of money, towered above us; passing between the piers, we drew up alongside the quay, and came to an anchor.

St. Heliers seemed full of animation. Of all the little settlements in these islands, it is the busiest and most enterprising, the most lively and enlivening. At this early period of the year, many places would have looked dull and lifeless. We had expected that Jersey would be quiet and deserted, and were not a little disappointed at the "evidence of a great crowd," which met us on all sides; but in the end we found that the crowd scattered, and that we were to have as much solitude in the island as the most exacting misanthrope could desire.

The "great crowd" in part consisted of vehicles. The quays were lined with them. If a whole fleet of vessels had been expected, greater preparation need not have been made. Every inn and hotel in the place—and in Jersey their name is legion—must have turned out all its omnibuses and flys for the occasion. Besides this, carts and waggons were in great force, as if Jersey, like Paris, had opened an exhibition, and was expecting cargoes from the outer world. As we walked along the quays towards the hotel—the omnibus taking charge of our traps—they passed us one after the other in a procession that we thought would never end. Four-fifths of them were empty, and had had their trouble for their pains of coming down; but "Hope springs eternal in the human breast;" and what did not happen yesterday may happen to-morrow. It is fortunate that human nature is so constituted, or we should never get through the world.

We passed away from the quays, which are so extensive as to form quite a walk. The streets of the town were quiet and deserted. It was only eight o'clock, and the town seemed sleeping yet; for it was Sunday morning, and the shops were closed. There was hardly a creature to be seen, and we had to trust to memory in finding our way to our destination.

This destination was Bree's Stopford Hotel, and it is impossible to proceed with our narrative without recording that we have seldom found ourselves more happy and comfortable than we were here.

There was not a fault to find with the whole arrangement of the

inn, excepting that Mr. Bree's charges are too moderate for all the liberality he bestows upon his guests. This is a rare and exceptional virtue in these days. The appointment of the house was excellent, and so was the cuisine; the table d'hôte was abundant, and the menu was always drawn up with judgment. The delicious hot rolls and fresh butter supplied at breakfast were alone worth a visit to Jersey; whilst the snow-white damask and the well-kept silver added no little to one's serenity of mind. Mr. Bree, himself, was the most generous and attentive of hosts. The same servants we had found five years ago were still here, which says much for the master of an establishment in which there must inevitably be much to try the temperament. If we did not recognise them, they recognised us, and received us quite as if we had been an old habitué of the place.

We have gone a little out of our way to bestow praise where it is so justly deserved, for exceptional merit should meet with exceptional treatment. We have found nothing better in any first-rate hotel in London or on the Continent than we found at Bree's Stopford Hotel in Jersey, whilst the charges were less than a third of what we have often paid elsewhere. Compare them, for instance, with the Hôtel Continental in Paris, where two friends recently stayed. Arriving at six in the evening, and leaving at eleven the next day, their rooms perched on the fifth floor, their bill came to between eighty and ninety francs. Moderation in these days is lost sight of, and extortion is the rule.

So it is clear that anyone who desires a very happy and healthful holiday, which will not greatly diminish the weight of his purse, need go no further than this little island of Jersey, and place himself under the care of Mr. Bree.

We had expected to find the hotel empty, or very nearly so, at this early season, but between fifty and sixty people sat down to table d'hôte. Many of those present had come from the Midland and Northern Counties of England, tempted across the Channel by the exceptional beauty of the weather. It was an old-fashioned May; one the poets have sung of from time immemorial, but which seems to have vanished with the light of other days. Our host told us that he himself was surprised at the number of his guests; never before at that season of the year had he mustered so strong a party.

He was, however, equal to the occasion. Everything went on as quietly and smoothly as clockwork; and we two in our little sitting-room were as full of repose as if the large public drawing-room not far off had not been full of a crowd of visitors, who were all apparently as happy as the day was long. If the world only knew half the charm of Jersey in the "Merrie Month of May," it would flock to it, not in tens or fifties, but in hundreds. One of the given conditions must of course be that it is an old-fashioned May, with balmy air, and blue skies, and brilliant sunshine. A May in which



HARBOUR AND FORT REGENT.

there is no east wind. Such a May we had in this year of grace 1889.

That first morning, being Sunday, we went to the parish church, where we heard the English Liturgy read in French. It was impossible to avoid a comparison, or to feel how much it lost in beauty, dignity and grandeur by the translation. The old Dean was dead and a new Dean reigned in his stead. The service is in French in the morning, in English in the afternoon. The church itself is of the 14th century, but has been much restored, and possesses no great feature of interest.

The chief charm of Jersey lies in the sylvan beauty of the island; its numerous small excursions and exquisite drives; the loveliness of its bays, which curve round in such perfect crescents, where the water surges to and fro and ebbs and flows in gentle ripples over the whitest, most sparkling sand and shore. The water itself is clear and transparent; of that pale aqua-marine which enables you to see the bottom even of a great depth; which makes you long to become a fish, that you might rejoice in a new sensation. The channel round about Jersey has often been painted, but its beauties can never be realized on canvas. We remember once seeing a picture of Brett's of Jersey rocks, wherein the water was represented in the vivid colours that Brett delights in. We thought it exaggerated, but when we came to see it for ourselves, we confessed that he had kept his tones carefully within bounds.

And this experience holds good in many other instances. Nature has so many phases that in seeing a startling sunrise or sunset on canvas, the gloomy depths of a storm, the leaden dulness of a November sky, the most brilliant colours of spring, or the most gorgeous tones of autumn, it is dangerous to say that anything is exaggerated. The most purple haze on distant hills that ever artist painted is possible in nature, and may be seen at some time or other; the softest light in the sky equally with the most vivid and glowing. And the exceptional in nature is worthy of record quite as much as the exceptional in man.

But it is not given to every one to discover nature in her exceptional moods and phases. Even in artists there are degrees of appreciation. With many the faculty has never been properly cultivated, and the eyes are withheld from beholding the beauties that are there. To too many

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

This is true of a very large proportion of mankind; and perhaps it is partly due to the fact that as one of the charms of nature at her best and highest is a singular purity, refinement, and repose, she is only in perfect harmony with those whose lives are characterized by these virtues.

Again, imagination is also necessary to thoroughly appreciate nature and be in perfect harmony with her. It was Turner's imagination that enabled him to see nature as few can see her. His apparent exaggerations are not really exaggerations at all. We have most of us frequently seen phases that on canvas would have been declared impossible, and that even Turner never approached; but they invariably recall him to memory, and cause one to have only a higher reverence for a genius that has never been equalled and probably never will be.

It is possible to see Jersey and all its beauties in more ways than one.

For those who are sociably inclined, and, like the elephants, prefer to travel in droves, or do not wish to tax their purse-strings too heavily, nothing can be better or pleasanter than the char-a-bancs, which show you the island in a certain number of days. They are huge vehicles drawn by four horses, holding some thirty to forty people. You mount by ladders, and are perched so high in the air that as you drive you may see over the tallest hedge, and look very much down upon the people you pass on the road.

And for those who, like ourselves, prefer a quieter life, there are carriages of every description to be hired at a very moderate rate. We safely left the arrangement of all this to Mr. Bree, who provided us with a comfortable Victoria, a pair of strong little horses, and a capital coachman who knew every inch of the island, all its secrets and all its legends; and who was not above giving us his opinion upon the best points for photographing, especially when that opinion differed from ours.

For we had each brought a camera, for the sake of amusement and carrying away pleasant recollections. To the initiated we may observe that the one was a half-plate, the other a detective instantaneous camera, which took people "quite unknown," so that each went his way—the one unconscious of having been victimised, the other with a comfortable feeling of possessing a type of humanity, it might be in some ludicrous posture, or in the profound depths of contemplation; the "deep furrow of thought," the far-off gaze, faithfully given. The amusement to be derived from these detective cameras is endless; every action is recorded, and life and movement are placed before you; nothing is wanting but the voice, at which photography for the present draws the line. But when people travel with M. Bernier at the rate of one hundred and twenty-four an hour, it may be that even photographs will converse. Human beings will scarcely have time to do so.

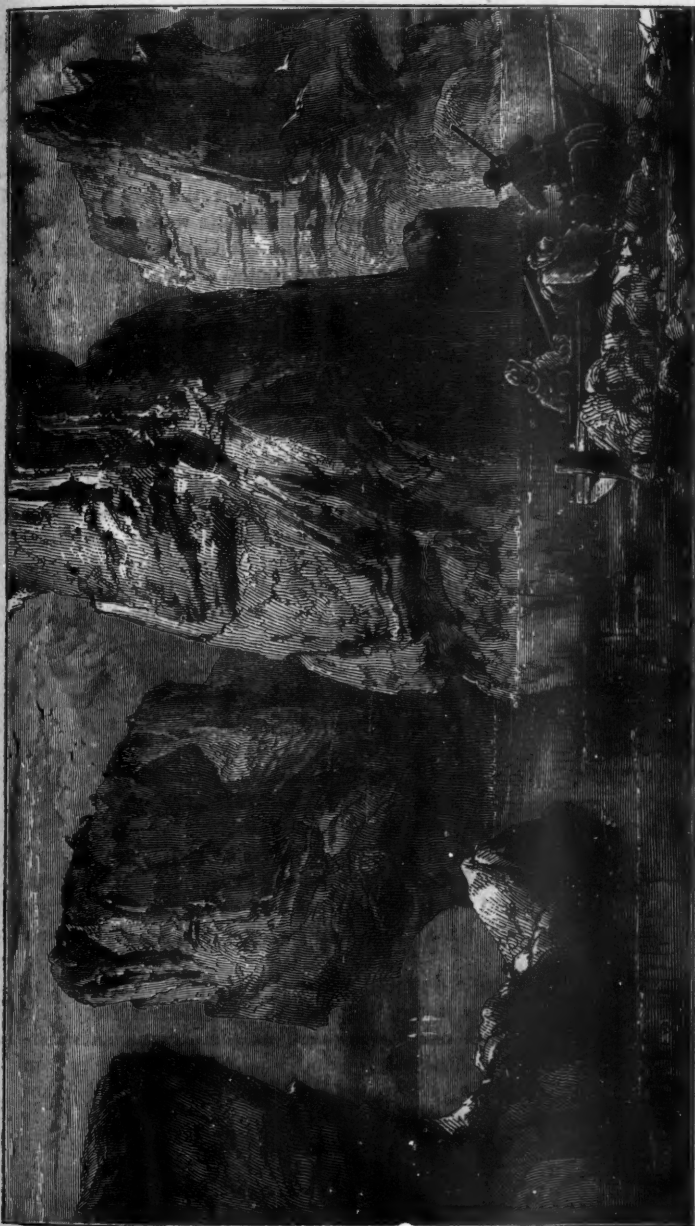
Our first drive in Jersey was also one of the most beautiful. The coachman dashed through the town and woke the echoes of the quiet streets. Then sweeping round by the sea shore, the full stretch of St. Aubyn's Bay opened up to us.

It was a brilliant afternoon. The sea was intensely beautiful, and



GRÈVE DE LECO.

It was a beautiful afternoon. The sea was intensely beautiful, and
of St. Andrew's Bay opened up to us. I then saw the tall, slender
of the coast. I then saw the tall, slender



THE PATENOSTERS.

the sunlight was reflected in a myriad jewels upon the water. Down the full curve of the bay you might trace the tide, breaking in long, white, clear lines upon the sparkling sand. Even the gloomy fortress of St. Elizabeth, which knew its best days in the time of the Virgin Queen, looked bright, picturesque and dignified, worthy its tradition. The tide was high, and it was now surrounded by the shimmering water, and small white-winged boats flitting about the bay lent their enchantment to the scene. Just beyond the Castle were the ruins of the Hermitage, of far greater antiquity than the Castle itself, and of more romantic interest. It is rudely constructed of small stones, and here St. Helier is said to have been murdered by Norman pirates.

Passing beyond all this, and leaving behind us the small houses that here and there enliven the bay, if they do not add to its beauty, we turned our backs upon the sea, and entered Mill-brook Valley.

It is perhaps the most beautiful valley in Jersey, fertile, laughing, and luxuriant. To our left were high banks covered with ferns and wild flowers, above which stretched green and wooded slopes. On our right the valley widened. Rich green pastures in which the famous cows grazed and found a home alternated with orchards, whose trees were a perfect wealth of dazzling blossom. Beneath, the green grass was strewn with fallen petals, beautiful and delicate as butterflies' wings. Here and there were cottages covered with creepers and roses. Fuchsia trees grew high, and gorgeous geraniums and magnificent rhododendrons seemed to turn the very atmosphere into a kaleidoscope of colouring. Beyond the pastures and orchards and cottages—the latter were very few and far between—the hills again arose in wooded slopes, the homes of countless ferns and wild flowers. A small stream ran through the valley, which, if it did not "make music as it flowed," at least reflected the blue sky above, and where, like Narcissus, you might behold the fair beauty of your countenance, and, if you pleased, fall in love with it, and be turned into a daffodil, to inhabit for ever after the beautiful and surrounding woods. Daffodils there were in abundance, but whether, like Narcissus, they had been transformed, we could not tell. They did not speak, but they were lovely, and seeing them, we loved them as they were.

Presently we came to a deserted mill; deserted, perhaps, only for the day; and there was a romantic pool, which reflected everything around; and a beautiful old water-wheel, as picturesque as water-wheel can be in an enchanted valley; and a tall factory chimney rose up beyond, hideous and aggressive, and terribly out of place. What it meant we knew not, and would not enquire.

We ascended to higher ground, and presently reached the sea on the northern side of the island. It is one of the charms of Jersey, that you are ever coming unexpectedly upon the sea. The beauties of land and water are so intermingled that you can scarcely separate the one from the other. And yet you have each to perfection. It is

seldom that in so small an island you find so much richness and luxuriance of vegetation. The little valleys are perfect in their way. The trees are well-grown, the flowers are brilliant and abundant; the grass of the meadows is rich and lawn-like. No wonder the cows yield such rich butter and milk; and that the cattle generally are excellent.

On the other hand, the coast scenery is singularly beautiful and diversified. Point after point stretches out to the sea. Rocks rise out of the water in all directions, and the waves for ever dash about them in white foaming eddies, throwing upward their feathery spray. The wild birds perch upon the points, and fly, and scream, and clang with that peculiar sound that is so suggestive of freedom and solitude and grandeur, and thrills one through and through, no matter how or when we hear it.

We came out upon Bonne Nuit Bay, where the beach was pebbly and the low reefs ran out to a point, and the ever restless and moving water broke and surged over the smooth surface. For a time we followed the coast, and traced the broken outlines in all their wild beauty. The sea air blew up fresh and invigorating, the atmosphere itself was soft, and clear, and radiant, and the sun travelling westward touched all with gold.

We turned once more inland, occasionally passing an old church, or a small settlement of houses, but meeting with nothing so beautiful and luxuriant as the Mill-brook Valley.

One of our pleasantest drives was to St. Brelade's Bay, on the south side of the island, and beyond St. Aubyn's Bay. The St. Brelade's Bay Hotel was delightfully situated close to the water, and next to Bree's Stopford Hotel is the best managed and the most reasonable hotel in Jersey. We found the table in the dining-room spread sumptuously with fresh lobsters and every description of meat and poultry: everything was excellently served; and here, too, we were surprised at the moderation of the charge. We could quite imagine, as our good and intelligent host informed us, that people would often come and stay here weeks together. Both summer and winter, the quarters must be wonderfully pleasant.

The place to-day was exceedingly quiet and solitary. We had it to ourselves, with the exception of an eccentric old couple: an antiquated Darby and Joan, who had evidently trodden life's stormy pathway together, and shared each other's joys and sorrows. In this instance the sorrows seemed to have predominated. In both countenances there was that sad, subdued, weather-beaten expression which is so pathetic, goes so straight to the heart, and is so seldom seen excepting where the life has been careworn and heavy-laden. These two had now evidently very nearly arrived at the end of their journey. They might have come out of Noah's Ark, both as to age and attire. The one was in clerical garb of some remote period; the other wore the coal-scuttle bonnet that was fashionable in the days

of our grandmothers. They were staying at the inn ; had been there some time ; and told us how admirable they found it ; so out of the world, yet so civilized and well-appointed.

Close to the inn, to the right, was the old Parish Church, the oldest in the island, dating from the 12th century. The sea has here encroached upon the coast, and the waves now wash the very walls of the building and beat against its foundations, as if they would destroy by their power and might what time has spared.

It is a lovely view as you stand and gaze seawards over the shallow precipice. The seagulls are flying about, clanging and screaming : they settle for a moment upon the rocks, upon the points of the church and the old tower, only to rise again on swifter wing and with louder cry. The rocks shelve down far into the water, and the restless tide breaks over them night and day, summer and winter, with perpetual motion. They are brown and slippery ; and here and there a deep, dark, purple spot betrays hidden rocks below the shimmering surface. The bay sweeps round in a wide curve, and the sea ebbs and flows over the white sand with a soothing, lulling sound to those who may be lying upon the shore. In the distance Fret Point looms out, completing the crescent of the bay.

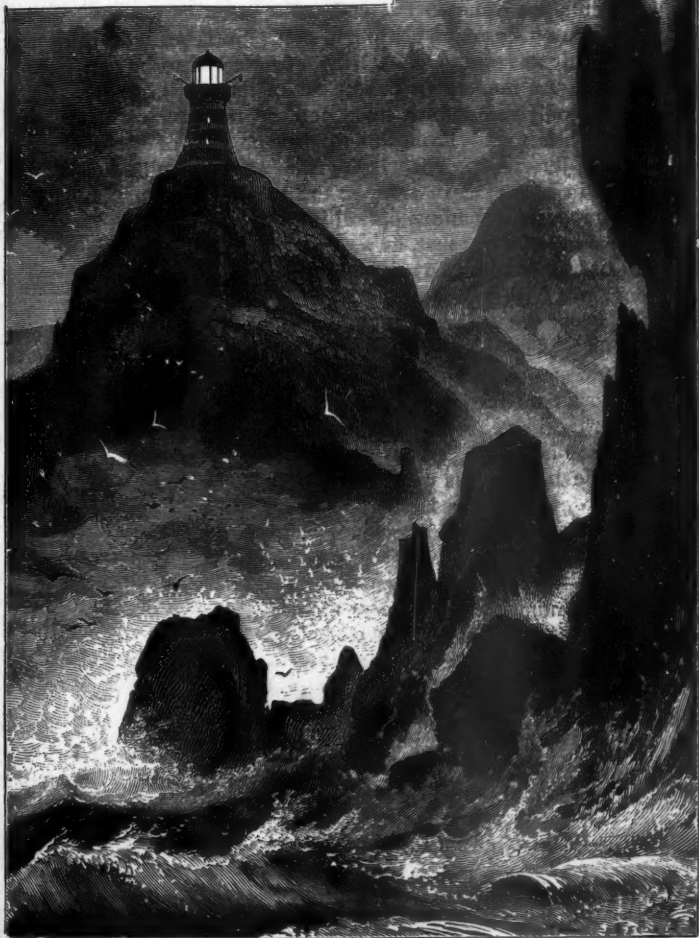
Behind us small birds are singing in the trees which surround a picturesque parsonage. No doubt they have built in all the nooks and hollows of the church, year in, year out, from time immemorial. The church itself is very small, but interesting, and over the west doorway a singular gargoyle stretches outwards, as if challenging evil spirits. A building close by, no larger than a mortuary, but looking older and quainter than the church itself, is called the Fishermen's Chapel ; and here, probably, the women of the neighbourhood come sometimes to pray for those belonging to them at sea, who risk their lives for their daily bread, and to provide "wholesome farin'" for the world at large.

We had time to take in and contemplate all this that lovely May day ; for we made St. Brelade's Bay our mid-day halting place, so that the horses, like ourselves, might have rest and refreshment. In our subsequent halts in the different parts of the island on other days we never found a pleasanter spot, and never an inn a tithe as comfortable.

We were fortunate, too, in having it to ourselves. Only once at the mid-day rest did we happen to come across the two or three char-a-bancs and small crowd of excursionists that were perambulating the island in flocks and herds. No doubt they found their mode of travelling very exhilarating ; the speed of four horses is much more enlivening than that of two ; but our quiet hours and our solitary drives à deux infinitely added to the charm of our own sojourn.

It was satisfactory also to be able to stop the carriage whenever we came upon a spot that was unusually picturesque, or "composed well" as a picture. Over and over again we took photographs of

places that probably had never been photographed before. The island is full of these lovely and exquisite scenes; surprises reserved by nature; for they come upon you in the most unexpected manner. A sudden turn in the road opens out a charming valley, where, perhaps, you anticipated nothing but a barren tract; or gaining a height, the full glory of



THE CORBIÈRES.

the shimmering sea bursts upon your dazzled vision. Our driver was never so happy as when on any of these occasions he and his carriage and his cattle came in as an accompaniment; and if a charming landscape presented itself towards the end of the day, when our last plate had been taken, his distress was genuine.

Two of our days stand out perhaps above all others. On the one day we left the carriage for a time, and went down a narrow barren valley. A few sheep browsed upon the rugged sides. A narrow stream ran towards the sea. The tone of the hills was sad and sombre. Everything of a smiling aspect seemed to have fled away. No creature, human or animal, crossed our path.

Presently we came to the end. Far below us was the sea. The land jutted out in rocks, sharp and precipitous, beautiful in form and outline. It was steep and shelving, and we had to be careful of our foothold. An immense rock rose out of the midst of the water, and we could only gain it by a steep pathway not much wider than the sole of one's foot. From this we had full view of the one waterfall of which Jersey is proud. It fell from a considerable height, finally landing in a shower of spray in the small cauldron formed by the circling rocks. A curious optical illusion, which I had never noticed in any other fall, was that, as we looked at the water going down, the rock beside it appeared to be ascending. We both noticed the strange effect.

This was one of the most striking parts of the island. The view was wild and grand. The sea birds flew about glinting in the sunshine. The water dashed and plashed and roared in the cauldron, and about the rocks, as if angry that any bounds should be imposed upon it. And we, perched upon the pinnacle of the rock, seemed scarcely to have any pathway wherewith to return to land.

A little beyond this we came to what was called the Devil's Coal Hole, or cauldron, or kitchen; some portion, at any rate, of the domestic department of the lower regions. Here we passed through a shed or shanty, where refreshments in the shape of stale buns and lemonade—and probably stronger waters—were dispensed by a smiling handmaiden, who took charge of our cameras. Next we descended a suicidal flight of steps until we reached the bottom of a chasm. We were rewarded for our pains by an immense hole in the rock, worn smooth by the action of the water, through which a small boat might have passed out to the open sea: the sort of phenomenon that in other places is usually called a Devil's post-office or a Giant's leg. We were not unusually impressed, but we had paid our fee and done our duty, and so departed with easy consciences.

A short walk round the coast, an upward climb over sloping hills, and at the appointed place we found our driver awaiting us with admirable patience.

The other day referred to included our visit to Mont Orgeuil Castle and the little harbour of Gorey. The castle is a magnificent

ruin of the twelfth or thirteenth century. It stands overlooking the sea, which it commands. From its battlemented towers you may trace, on a clear day, the coast of France and the spires of the Cathedral of Coutances. The Castle walls are grey and hoary, moss and lichen-grown, with small windows and portholes dotted about at irregular intervals. It is romantic and picturesque. The stretch of sea it overlooks is broad and wide. Its pale opalescent colours are shimmering and gleaming in the sunshine. Everything is golden and glowing. The coast is broken and rugged and diversified. Every now and then a mist rolls up with curious effect: rises white and opaque, obscuring everything for the moment. Then it rolls away "as a vapour," and again leaves everything clear and glorious and grand.

You pass into the precincts of the Castle through an ancient archway. The steps leading upwards are rugged, the passage is narrow, the walls are thick and solid. It would form a prison from which there would be small chance of escape. More than once in days gone by, an unhappy captive has thrown himself from the tower, hoping for freedom, but has only perished in the vain attempt. A small outwork, very fine and interesting, is called *Cæsar's Fort*, though history does not say whether *Cæsar* ever had anything to do with it. *King John* is said to have enlarged the fortifications; and *Charles II.* inhabited the Castle when he took refuge in Jersey. For even then, as now, Jersey seems to have been a shelter for the destitute.

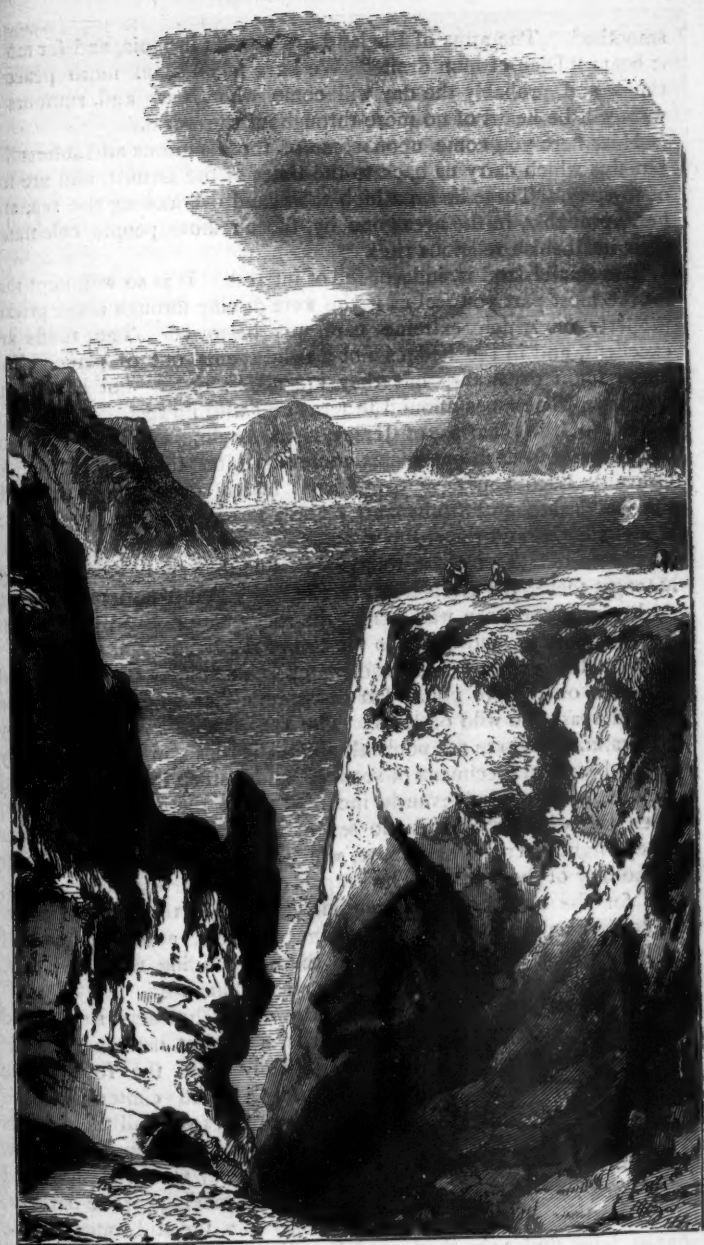
One of the most picturesque things in the island is the small village and harbour of *Gorey*, lying immediately under the very shadow of the Castle. It is so far down that everything from this distance looks small and dwarfed. It is a little harbour of refuge, and is crowded with fishing boats. The small stone pier goes round in a semicircle, and on the miniature quay waggons are busily at work loading hay from barges alongside. We talk to the men, but they speak a patois which, as far as language is concerned, is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. We have great difficulty in making each other mutually understood, but in spite of this we part mutually good friends.

Amongst the small houses lining the quay is the inn, but we cannot say as much for it as we did for the inn at *St. Brelade's Bay*. Nor is the landlady as civil and attentive as our host of the former. But we are shown into an upper room, which is a new and excellent dining-room, entirely built of pitch pine, or some equally white and cheerful wood; and here we are served with delicious lobsters, and a baron of beef which would tempt the most unwary appetite.

Far above the little village, *Mont Orgeuil* rears its dignified head. The sight of it has struck terror to many a heart in days gone by; but those days are over. It has been left to peace and repose for many an age; its frowns have softened; its rugged sides have



MONT ORGEUIL.



PONT DE MOULIN.

smoothed. The arms of England are now its insignia, and for motto it bears "Dieu et mon droit." We have fallen upon more peaceful times, and probably the day will come when wars and rumours of wars will be heard of no more throughout the world.

Near here you come upon some of those curious and interesting remains which carry us back to the times of the Druids, and are full of mystery. These lie on a high table-land overlooking the sea, and here, probably, in the ages gone by, those remote people celebrated their heathenish religious rites.

The small island is, indeed, full of interest. It is so well kept that for the most part you feel as if you were driving through some private property on which extreme care was bestowed. The roads are excellent, and in the hedges not a twig seems out of place. You come upon dry walls, but they are all in order—not a stone is wanting. The lanes abound in ferns and wild flowers.

One of the charms of Jersey is its smallness. The bays are numerous, and each one seems more beautiful than the other. At Grève de Lecq you have magnificent rocks; deep gullies in which the sea dashes and froths and foams; where the winds roar on a winter's night, and the storm seems to threaten the very foundations of the earth. The coast, too, is well guarded by lighthouses, and amongst these, the Corbières are singularly grand and picturesque. At low water you can walk across the rocky pathway to them, mount the steep ascent, and climb to the top of the lighthouse.

Here the view of land and water is magnificent. The island stretches out before you. Far down on either side you trace the rugged coast, the wild outlines. The sea plashes around. To-day it is calm, and there are pools all about the rocks, in which you may gather beautiful specimens of seaweed, and disturb the limpets, if you are cruelly and mischievously inclined. But there are other days, when the winds roar and the sea dashes mightily, and the water sweeps right over the lighthouse, which seems to tremble and shiver at the fury of the storm. The keepers cannot hear each other speak, and for the time being all communication with the shore is interrupted. The sea-birds alone defy the elements, and fly and wheel about, and add their wild clang to the surrounding rush and roar. The whole scene is in the highest degree sublime.

St. Brelade's Bay lies just beyond, with its heathery slopes, and again beyond that and Fret Point is the small but beautiful Portelet Bay, with its martello tower rising boldly from the rock in the centre of the crescent. Here you may sit and contemplate the grandeur of the coast, and watch the sunrises with all the glorious colours that flame in the sky, and change, and shift, and disappear. Here vessels are constantly passing, making way for St. Heliers, and often, just as they are rounding the point and making for the harbour, you see them drop sail and glide gently into the still waters of the haven, lying under the shadow of Fort Regent.

Of the vegetation of Jersey it is almost unnecessary to speak. Everything seems to grow in abundance. Jersey pears and grapes are famous all the world over. Tropical plants grow in the open air. The tall, waving Indian grass is everywhere seen, with all its graceful motions. Flowers are gorgeous and abundant. The orange blossom scents the air of many a garden. The magnolia grows to great dimensions, and its flowers are wonderful. Loveliest of all sights in the island is the rich gorse and broom. These grow in such abundance, such golden tints, as cannot be surpassed. Neither pen nor pencil could do justice to their splendour. And again we come upon deep pools, overshadowed by tall trees and graceful weeping willows, giving long and romantic vistas, where nothing is wanted to complete the picture but the song of the nightingale.

And if the days are beautiful, so are the nights. If you are staying at some out-of-the-way inn, commanding one of the lovely bays, you may watch the moon rising in all her glory, and flooding sea and land with her pale silvery light. The water will sparkle and shimmer with countless white jewels. Now and then a small boat crosses this fairy pathway, and you trace her dark picturesque outlines as she passes under the moonbeams and disappears in the gloom beyond. The coast on either hand is distinctly outlined, and the headlands jutting out into the sea look solemn and severe. Night succeeds day and day night, and each is full of its own beauty : the one full of gorgeous, glowing sunshine and light and life and motion ; the other possessing the softness and repose of darkness, all the mystery and all the magic of the starry heavens.

We felt all the charm of Jersey in that merrie month of May, and the charm was of no light or slight description. It was, indeed, beyond description. To all was added the infinite and spiritual delight of minds "attuned to one key ;" that harmony of companionship of which all the poets have sung, and will continue to sing as long as the world lasts.

Day after day our coachman had taken us a fresh drive, lasting some six or eight hours. Day after day we had seen new beauties. Day after day, instead of contracting, the small island seemed to expand and grow larger. In our drives every now and then we would come upon lovely, long avenues, where the trees met overhead, and we traced the delicate interlacing of the branches and all their ramifications ; and the tender green of the fresh spring leaves seemed to infuse into one their own life and health and vigour, and the blue sky and the sunshine glinted and flashed as the breeze moved and rustled the smiling verdure. All nature rejoiced, and we rejoiced with her. It was impossible not to catch the spirit and tone of our surroundings. The most stricken heart must have found its sorrows subdued and brightened, whilst those whom for the moment sorrow touched not, might rise to the highest point of enthusiasm and exhilaration.



THE CASSETS.

But nothing lasts for ever, and our turn came for departing. We left with sorrow. We had had a wonderfully quiet and happy time in Jersey, without one drawback to record, one incident to regret. Uninterrupted sunshine had attended and gilded our days.

The last morning dawned, and we left with mutual regrets. The morning was brilliant with sunshine as we went down to the quay, which is far quieter at the departure than the arrival of a vessel. The little boat for St. Malo, whither we were bound, was getting up steam. Of the few passengers on board, some looked laden with the spoils of Jersey. Butter and eggs seemed in the ascendant; and yet to take butter to Normandy and Brittany would surely be as wise as taking coals to Newcastle.

Before long we had passed beyond the piers. Out on the broad water, there were innumerable rocks about our path, but we cunningly steered through them all. The sea was calm and beautiful. Never had it looked clearer and more transparent. Never had its lights and shades, the pale opal, the darker green, the deep purple, been more conspicuous. Jersey dissolved and disappeared until it became a mere dream-speck in the horizon. We had parted from it, but we still remained as a mutual consolation to each other.

"We couldn't have had a happier time," said H. "Will it be equally so in the days that lie before us?"

"I have no doubt of it," I replied. "Our happiness is very much under our own control. Given fair weather, and the spirit of adventure, combined with the novelty of new scenes and fresh faces, will compensate for the quiet charms of Jersey."

"En avant!" responded H. And on the whole, I don't know that one who in the future may pass through the stirring scenes of many a battlefield, and spur his charger to the sound of many a bugle call, could have given a better reply.



PROFESSOR LATIMER, F.R.S.

BY EMILY H. HUDDLESTON.

ONE muggy December afternoon a down train was drawn up on the platform of what we will call "Wigsby Junction." It had a slow stopping journey to make ere it would reach Clough, from whence it would dash off at express speed to Bolton-le-Moor, a run of fifty miles.

A pretty young woman in a tailor-made black gown and long bushy blue fox boa was leaning out of the window of a first-class carriage discussing a recent ball with a male chum who had come to see her off. His arm was resting on the window-sill as they cheerfully chattered, without the smallest reticence.

The lady airily remarked that she had lost all her luggage the day before, and had nothing left but a dressing-case. He inquired if a certain gold dagger, presumably a gift of his own, were among the missing effects? A turn of her head revealed it, fastening her grey tulle veil, and a glow of gratified vanity mounted to his forehead.

A thin gentleman in a frieze ulster and pair of gold spectacles, affecting to read the damp newspaper, just come down by another train, was furtively observing the little comedy. He could not decide whether or no he would enter the same carriage with the lady. Certainly not, if that blushing idiot were going too. But no. He was speaking of this as a last interview; informed her that he was going to India; and on the lady exhibiting more curiosity than responsiveness, expressed a dismal conviction that he would never return.

The thin man had nearly decided to travel with her—what an undulating figure! and despite her airy talk, what sympathetic brown eyes!

A gentleman of much the same type as the first youth now hurried up to the window where leant the circe of the blue fox boa; the last comer being evidently another partner who had received permission to see her off.

"I have been hunting everywhere for you," he began, stopping short with a crestfallen air on perceiving the other beau, who also wore an air of displeasure; but it quickly disappeared—had he not been drowning himself in those limpid eyes during a delightful ten minutes tête-à-tête? It must be over anyhow in a minute. The guard's whistle sounded. It was necessary for the thin gentleman to take his seat somewhere. He glanced again at the coveted carriage. The two young men blocked up the window. He felt unwilling to ask them to move, but could not enter without.

By such trifles are important events sometimes decided. He turned away, and got into a carriage lower down.

The four corner seats were all appropriated, and he repented himself of the vacillation which had prevented him from securing one. There was a cold north wind blowing, and he seated himself with his back to the engine in case anyone with a fanatical belief in fresh air should wish to open a window. He was already suffering from slight bronchial irritation, and had to speak at a public meeting that evening.

In fact, he was a Professor of Geology, on his way to lecture at the important town of Clough.

Having glanced through his newspaper with the air of a man who only sought to eliminate salient points, and had no time to waste on extraneous matter, he threw it aside and, opening his travelling bag, proceeded to look over his notes for the evening's oration.

But Professor Latimer had sensitive nerves, and the pair of eyes on either side of him provoked self-consciousness and a wandering attention. The note-book was laid down, and he began to take mental stock of his companions. The politely averted gaze of a gentleman in the opposite corner seemed to suggest that he might have been doing the same by the Professor. The former was a big, broad-shouldered man, with a massive forehead, reddish beard, and large, absorbed-looking hazel eyes, that focussed slowly like those of a near-sighted person.

In the netting overhead was a Gladstone bag with the name "Paul Quince" legibly printed thereon. At the next station one of the passengers got out and Professor Latimer exchanged his seat to that opposite the owner of the Gladstone bag.

A slight observation was exchanged between them, and the Professor put away his notes and leaned forward in an attitude peculiar to him, as though open to conversation. Something was said of the slowness of the mixed train in which they were travelling, and Latimer observed that it was the only one available to carry him to Clough in time to deliver a lecture that evening.

The slight, courteous answer of his vis-à-vis indicated that he was aware of the intended lecture, and of its being a special occasion at Clough.

Professor Latimer's amour propre was gratified by the reply, in its implied recognition of his fame as a lecturer, and while his heart warmed, his tongue loosened. From the doings of the scientific societies they dwelt on the great man's more immediate branch of study. Paul Quince averred that it was a favourite subject with himself. But his time being otherwise engaged, he had none to expend on the pursuit of geology. He did not explain what his profession might be, though the Professor made a half pause of interrogation. For though unable to recall ever having heard the name of Paul Quince, he felt convinced in his own mind that he was speaking to an eminent personage.

But in spite of the stranger's reticence on this point, they had

many subjects in common, and each unconsciously inspiring the other, talked his best, cementing an apparently mutual attraction.

Presently the other passengers left the train, and the two men finding themselves alone together ventured to light, one a cigarette, the other a pipe; the Professor remarking that it was a twenty-mile run to the next station.

Their sympathy, perfect hitherto, appeared not quite so complete when an unfortunate topic cropped up, and Paul Quince demurred to an arbitrary dictum of the geologist's on the subject of animal magnetism; the latter sweepingly asserting that such practices were invariably unsuccessful, except in the case of hysterical patients, and that the subjecting of such to so-called hypnotic treatment was either an iniquitous tampering with their disordered nervous systems, or an incitement to simulation and deceit.

A curious smile quivered round Paul Quince's mouth, and he paused suggestively as though unwilling to notice an illogical sophism which his companion could not have seriously meant to commit himself to.

Latimer felt nettled by the other's manner—modern psychology was abhorrent to his narrow, though acute intellect, and the very mention of hypnotism or clairvoyance was certain to arouse his combative instincts.

"I feel sure, sir," he tartly replied to the unexpressed dissent of the stranger, "that you can have no toleration for charlatanism, and must agree with me that the alleged curative powers of mesmerism and kindred agencies are a disgrace to the intelligence of the age."

"There will always," returned Paul Quince, "be rogues, who by imitation of truth, can make a living out of the credulity of fools. "Yes, truth, sir," for the Professor had shrugged his shoulders at the word. "Magnetic force is as much a fact as the nose on my face, and as interesting a ground for exploration as that of any other field of inquiry."

It was now the geologist's turn to gaze at his companion with cynical surprise. Indeed their mutual admiration had sensibly cooled in the last few minutes.

"Considering the absence of any proven useful result from mesmerism, and the triviality of clairvoyant information, I can't see where the interest comes in," opined the sceptic, bluntly.

"You have, of course, investigated the subject?"

"No, sir. My time is too valuable to admit of such trifling, except in the way of amusement, and even in that aspect the occult has no attractions for me."

Again the suppressed, half-quizzical smile that had irritated the scientist previously. "But are you warranted," said his interlocutor, persuasively, "in treating so contemptuously a subject which you admit to be *terra incognita* to you?"

"I am equally ignorant sir, of jugglery, soothsaying, thimble-rig,

card-sharpening, and similar chicanery, which, I suppose, you will allow to be beneath the dignity of a man of character and science?"

Paul Quince shrugged his shoulders in deprecation of such an analogy. "And yet," he said, banteringly, "unless I am much mistaken, you would be yourself very sensitive to hypnotism." Then observing a red spark of anger in his companion's eye, he hastened to change the subject, and, dragging down his Gladstone from the netting overhead, produced a canvas bag of pebbles and fossils.

"I should be glad of your opinion," he said, conciliatorily, "on a very curious spar I obtained from some excavations in Cornwall," handing the Professor a shining mineral. "A crystallisation of very peculiar——"

"Common enough—common enough—ordinary Derbyshire spar," growled Latimer, whose temper was somewhat discomposed.

"Pardon me, I have not yet explained in what the peculiarity consists. Indeed, it is not easy of detection, but when examining it attentively one day, I observed a hitherto unnoticed phosphorescence vibrating like liquid fire, from rose colour to violet."

The Professor scrutinised the specimen more curiously, but after poring over it for a minute, declared he could see nothing of the phenomenon described.

Quince looked disappointed. "I am confident there is no hallucination, but am such a tyro in these matters. What would I not give for the opinion of a distinguished geologist on this *lusus naturæ*!"

The Professor drew down the blind. "My left eye is painfully sensitive to a side light," he said. "I will try again."

He held the spar in the hollow of his hand, and, after a few minutes' concentrated attention, uttered a cry of delight.

A lovely roseate effulgence scintillated in the heart of the mineral, changing as he looked into a pure sea-green tint.

"Aha!" exclaimed Paul Quince, jubilantly, "it reveals itself to you also. Invisible to the casual observer, but palpable to the initiated!"

The Professor, almost inebriated with excitement, was dumbly drinking in the wondrous spectacle. Presently his eyes became strained with the tension, and the colours faded somewhat. He turned away, and effusively shook his neighbour's hand.

"My dear sir, I congratulate you on this *trouvaille*. You are indeed a fortunate man."

"But how utilise my discovery?" holding out his palm for the specimen, which Latimer reluctantly resigned. "I am ignorant as a child with a glittering bauble. It may possess occult properties. How learn to apply them?"

"I should analyse it by a process of induction," said the other, drily, protruding his lower lip, and speaking with vague pomposity.

Quince may have deduced from this reply a disinclination on the

Professor's part to assist him in the comprehension of his prize, for when the latter began cross-examining him as to the exact locality where it had been found, the owner, with a humorous twinkle of the eye, gave equally vague replies, successfully parrying the other's thirst for information, and forcing him to the conclusion that his companion wished to be the sole possessor of such a unique specimen, and had no intention of giving anybody the chance of discovering a similar one. Already the magic spar had been hustled into the bag, mixed up with other miscellaneous samples, and Quince having surprised from the Professor an admission of its value, drew his travelling cap over his eyes and subsided into the corner, as though indisposed for further conversation.

Envious and angry, but not to be outdone in indifference, the geologist also drew down his cap and feigned slumber; but his heart, only to be reached through its scientific proclivities, was palpitating with excitement at the marvel he had witnessed. His brain teemed with theories for its solution, and he longed to have the phenomenon in his own possession—to test, probe, and experiment upon by every method that experience could suggest. In imagination, after carefully noting every symptomatic characteristic, his diagnosis had been crowned with success—and oh, the glory of exhibiting and lecturing on the *rara avis* at the Royal Society in the capacity of discoverer!

But stay—it was not he, but the stranger opposite, to whom such prospects of immortality belonged. Pshaw! without geological training to interpret it, his treasure trove would be merely a curiosity. Besides, the phosphorescence was not apparent to everyone. He himself, when at first approaching it in a sceptical spirit, had seen nothing; and it was some minutes before the soft, shoaling hues had flooded his vision with lambent flame.

An irrepressible desire to obtain possession of the spar increased at the recollection, and he felt capable of parting with half his fortune if this desideratum could be obtained for money.

But then, again, a very extravagant bid might only confirm the possessor of the *lusus naturæ* in his opinion of its worth, and so indispose him to part with it. The Professor gnashed his teeth with vexation. A slight snore became audible.

"Many a man has been murdered for less," thought Latimer, grimly, not referring to the snore, and glaring at his sleeping companion. One resolute grip of the throat, and he might never wake again. It would be brought in apoplexy. He himself might stop the train (after appropriating the spar), and assist in efforts for his resuscitation —

The wicked reverie went no further. The snore was but the precursor of returning consciousness. Paul Quince yawned, stretched himself, looked at his watch, and gave a sharp glance at his neighbour.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but did I not understand that you were to get out at Clough?"

"Certainly."

Quince held up his watch. "We must have passed it half an hour ago," he said.

The Professor gave a violent start, and felt as though a cold douche were descending on his head. He had been so completely engrossed, so entirely without cognizance of all outside the commotion in his brain, that, although he may have had some vague consciousness of the train stopping, the impression had been received passively, and conveyed no meaning.

Rudely awakened by the shock of Paul Quince's words, comprehension and dismay were simultaneous. Oh, horror! the train had been express since Clough, and would not stop till it reached Bolton-le-Moor at seven! The lecture was appointed for eight, and he was previously to have partaken of a light dinner with the Mayor. He could wire from Bolton-le-Moor, but there would probably be no means of returning from thence in time to keep his engagement.

This supposition proved correct, for after poring by the carriage lamp over the "*Bradshaw*" politely tendered to him by Quince, the Professor made out that the next train back would not reach Clough till eleven p.m.

In this dilemma no one could have been more courteously friendly than his travelling companion.

"'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good," he said. "You have lost your dinner, and your audience their lecture, but I shall be the gainer if you will accede to my request. My house is but a mile from Bolton-le-Moor, and I trust you will do me the favour of dining and remaining the night with me."

Thus relieved from his uncomfortable predicament, the Professor was profuse in his acknowledgments. A further reference to "*Bradshaw*" showed a convenient train for returning to Clough, as Latimer intended wiring the Mayor to postpone the lecture to the following evening.

A renewal of rapprochement was naturally consequent on the hospitable motion of Paul Quince, and as that hideous thing—"A naked human heart," is happily for many invisible to mortal eyes, the Professor's transient murderous feelings remained unsuspected by the victim of his imagination.

On arriving at Bolton-le-Moor, after despatching a telegram to the Mayor, Latimer was conducted by his host to a small brougham in waiting at the station, and they drove off at a pace indicative of a free-going horse. It was too dark to distinguish the country traversed, but ere long the brougham turned in at a lodge gate, and in five minutes more drew up at a house of, judging by the lights twinkling in the windows, fair, but not enormous dimensions. The door was opened by a quiet-mannered man-servant, too well trained to betray the smallest surprise at the appearance of an unexpected guest. Paul Quince opened a door to the right, and Latimer was

soon warming his chilled hands by a good fire in a handsome apartment, furnished richly, if sombrely, in drab cloth bordered with purple velvet; the walls, where visible, repeated the light drab shade in flock paper, but tall bookcases reaching to the ceiling occupied three sides of the room. The geologist, after his circulation had been restored by warmth and a glass of sherry, was ushered into a bedroom where a fire had been hastily lighted, and his dressing-bag unpacked.

While washing off the stains of travel, and assuming the dress suit he had intended lecturing in, old reminiscences crowded into the Professor's brain. Some fifteen to twenty years ago he had been well acquainted with the neighbourhood he now unexpectedly found himself in; having been in the habit of regularly spending the merry month of May at Bolton-le-Moor with an uncle who was Vicar of the parish. Tender spring vignettes rose spontaneously to his mind—orchards, fairy-like with apple-blossom; cowslips and golden king-cups rioting in the meadows; rook shooting knee-deep in lush grasses; a bend of the river on which a boat is gliding steered by a laughing girl. Could that not bad looking fellow in a straw hat bending negligently to the oar ever have been himself?

The Professor gulped down a heavy sigh—the girl had laughed “an honest heart to gall,” or rather, to place its happiness henceforth in the pursuit of inorganic matter.

Full of these and similar memories, he was summoned to dinner in a glowing little octagon room. His host was not apparently a family man, for the circular table was laid but for two. It was lighted from above, and a subdued roseate flush fell on silver, hot-house blooms, and long stemmed Venetian glasses of the opalescent tints of soap bubbles; silver gnomes who had apparently just dragged their loads from the bowels of the earth were salt cellars, and the whisk of a mermaid's tail revealed a pepper spray. Quaint conceits cropped up in unexpected disguise, and the host himself, in a glorified lounging jacket of amethyst velvet, which threw up his auburn beard and limpid hazel eyes, was in keeping with the prevailing fanciful effect.

But the dinner—as delicacy after delicacy, each testifying to the hand of an artiste, and accompanied by its appropriate rare and delicate wine, was carried round by the soft-footed attendant—greatly exercised the Professor's mind. Was this man sybarite enough to indulge in such repasts when alone in every-day life? For there could have been no time for the preparation of these high-class dishes after the arrival of the travellers. Latimer was himself a gourmand at heart, but being parsimonious in his habits, seldom gratified the taste, except at the expense of others.

“Do you know,” he said to his host, while discussing an ambrosial purée de faisán à la crème, “that your invitation has made me feel a modern Rip Van Winkle? I used to be an habitué of this

neighbourhood from paying an annual visit to my uncle, the Vicar of Bolton-le-Moor. He died fifteen years ago, and I have not been near the place since."

Paul Quince assumed an expression of polite interest, and waited for more.

"I used to know every person nearly, and every house within ten miles. But this one, though so near the station, is unfamiliar to me."

"You cannot expect to find the neighbourhood in statu quo after such an interval," responded Quince, evasively; "even among the landed proprietors many estates may have changed hands."

"To be sure, to be sure," assented Latimer, rubbing his own. "Who is at Henley Park now? How well I remember shooting my first rabbit there."

"I do not know the present possessor of Henley Park."

"And then there was the Squire of the parish—Mr. Gregory, of Beechlands—he had a large family—surely they have not died out?"

"I believe there is someone of that name still at Beechlands," returned the other, indifferently.

Latimer was checked in his flow of interrogatories. Why, Beechlands could not be more than two or three miles from his host's residence, and yet he actually was not certain of his nearest neighbour's name! It was very singular, and forced him to the conclusion that this genial, luxurious entertainer, if not a recluse, which his style of living showed no indication of, must be cut by the county.

A man of more sensitive feeling would have changed the subject, but the Professor had not yet done with it.

"And who," he asked, "occupies the dear old Vicarage now? Who is the present incumbent?"

"I cannot tell you," replied Paul Quince composedly, without affording any explanation of his extraordinary answer.

The Professor was completely taken aback, and applied himself to the discussion of the mauviettes en aspic just handed to him; but on raising his eyes, thought he detected a humorous gleam in those of his host. It was not the first time that he had surprised that subtle, ironical glance, and a hot spark of anger responded thereto in Latimer's breast. The polite attendant diverted his attention by handing him a telegram. It was in response to his own from the Mayor, who regretted that the Town Hall was engaged the following evening, but would be glad to wait on the Professor with a further proposition as he passed through Clough.

Latimer accordingly decided to return to London by the 9 a.m. express next morning, which would wait a quarter of an hour at Clough.

Dinner being over, Paul Quince drew aside a purple velvet

portière, disclosing an oriental-looking smoking room, with Indian carpets, divans, lounges, etc., while bronzes, statuettes, malachite, and other objects of dilettanteism abounded, as in every other room in this æsthetic dwelling. But little of these details did our Professor remark, his gaze being attracted to, and riveted on, an oil painting suspended over the mantelpiece.

It was that of a girl lying in a boat moored by a fleet of water-lilies. Her hat had fallen back, and her hands were clasped behind her chestnut head; but in the azure eyes, looking straight into those of the spectator, and in the smile that lurked in their mocking depths, Latimer recognised a semblance of his early love.

He gazed and gazed again, doubted, hesitated, and faltered out: "May I ask, sir, if that is a portrait?"

"It is; that of an ancestress of mine, painted by Romney," replied Paul Quince, handing his guest a box of cigars.

Now the figure was clad in a striped shirt, and serge skirt of the most modern boating type, and the chagrined Professor had received another proof of the inutility of interrogating his host.

It did just cross his mind that the latter might be a wealthy lunatic, and the stealthy-footed butler his keeper, which surmise would account for his ignorance of the society of the place.

It was well known that except on some trivial points the insane were often capable of talking rationally enough to deceive a mad doctor. Paul Quince's foible, or loose screw, was evidently a dislike to being questioned. Even in the train he had exhibited this weakness, and had drawn into his shell, and discouraged conversation when interrogated as to the exact locality where the phosphorescent spar had been found. Pooh! with the recollection came refutation of the absurd suspicion. Was not Paul Quince absolutely unattended in the train? No keeper, disguised or otherwise, lurked in his wake, which fact at once disposed of the insanity hypothesis. No, the cause of his eccentricity must be sought elsewhere, and the Professor's thoughts, diverted from it by recent events, rebounded to the more thrilling problem of the magic spar.

The two men had been dreamily smoking, occasionally exchanging an observation, but now the Professor's soul was be-mused in an abstraction as complete as that which had caused him to overrun his station. The more intently he dwelt on the object of his desire, the fiercer grew his jealousy that another should possess it. What a labour of love would it not be to pit science against inertia, and wrest from it the secret of the celestial fire that eluded the careless eye, but manifested itself —

"Would you not like to see it again," asked a quiet voice.

Latimer started. "How could you tell of what I was thinking?" he stammered.

"Perhaps by thought transference, which you do not believe in, by the way." He detached from his watch chain a Brahma key, and

unlocking a small casket, took from it the glittering spar, once more handing it to the Professor.

Latimer clutched it with a feverish grasp, and eagerly concentrating his attention upon it, in less time than previously the coveted phenomenon blessed his vision.

Blessed? should we not rather say cursed? for as the Professor's eyes drank in the beautiful, baleful light, wicked and desperate thoughts were busy in his brain, and what was still stranger, his ordinary hard-headed acuteness began to desert him, giving place to schemes as wild and irrational as ever entered the head of a madman.

"What to me," he soliloquised, "is my professional career? What do I care for life itself if this marvel of geology is to be possessed and expounded by Paul Quince instead of myself? Perish the thought! The weak alone are swayed by circumstances, which the strong bend to their own purpose, with the soul to appreciate, the intellect to solve and interpret."

"Do not look at it so intently," interposed Paul Quince. "After a time the scintillation affects the optic nerve—indeed the brain, and he reached out his hand for the spar.

"Never," hissed the Professor with unconscious ferocity. But quailing beneath the calm, surprised eye of Paul Quince, as a maniac under his keeper's, he resigned the treasure to its owner with a murmured apology—accepted by a gracious gesture.

"It is unwise," he said, "to steep one's senses in this strange luminary for many consecutive minutes, unacquainted as we are with properties that may be malevolent if uncontrolled."

The Professor assented verbally though with inward derision, and noted under his bushy brows that Quince after locking up the mineral in its casket, had replaced the key on his watch guard.

The silver chimes of a clock were ringing the midnight hour.

"If you will excuse me," murmured Latimer; "I have travelled a good deal to-day and feel disposed for rest."

"Certainly," assented the courteous host, "and if you can be ready for breakfast by eight o'clock, I will send you to the station in good time for your train."

On gaining his chamber, however, the Professor seemed in no haste to undress, but threw himself into an easy-chair and gazed thoughtfully on the fire. He was resolved on one point—ere he quitted the house, the casket should be denuded of its treasure. The theft itself would be easy of execution—but after? Must he abandon his career—fly into Spain? Change his name, and esteem the world well lost in the attainment of his heart's desire?

Wherefore? Once clear of the premises, what would there be to connect him with the abduction of the spar? Who was Paul Quince that his word should be taken against the contemptuous denial of Professor Latimer, F.R.S.? The burden of proof would lie with his

adversary, who could only produce circumstantial evidence, against which would be set the high character of the distinguished Professor—well known for his disdain of all appertaining to the occult.

Of course there was danger of Quince discovering his loss while he, Latimer, was still on his journey, and exposing him to the indignity of being apprehended and searched. But even in that event, there would be nothing extraordinary in a Professor of geology carrying a specimen about him, and with "*l'audace, toujours de l'audace,*" he might face it out.

Latimer decided not to be in too great haste to put his design into execution. Mr. Quince might be a light sleeper, or addicted to burning the midnight oil, and although through the long night he felt the attracting force of the marvellous fossil, as sensibly as steel does that of the magnet, it was not till just before daybreak that the Professor prepared for action.

He had taken careful cognizance of the situation of the smoking room, and although the key of the casket was unattainable, Latimer's pocket-knife contained a few little implements that might pick a lock, supposing he were unable to detach the lid at the hinges. Carefully shading his hand-candle, he stole down stairs, traversed the octagon dining-room, and, raising the portière, passed into the inner chamber. He cast a feverish glance round—the room was enveloped in shadow, save for the limited area illuminated by his candle. Its rays were reflected by a small silver object—oh, joy! there stood the casket—so soon to be rifled of its contents. The derisive smile of Paul Quince's "*ancestress*" followed the Professor as he moved, but could not now distract his attention—concentrated on the deed to be done. The lock being a foreign one was unfamiliar to him, and difficult to deal with; the hinges were rusty and a further hindrance. And it was not till after ten minutes' patient manipulation that the lid rolled to the ground, and the pillager seized his prize.

Spell-bound and absorbed, unconscious of aught but a burning need to invoke the delayed phosphorescence, he was unaware of a figure moving towards him out of the gloom.

"Dog and thief," shouted a voice of thunder, "is it thus that my hospitality is requited?"

The startled Professor fell back quivering from head to foot. Then with a bound and a yell, sprang at Paul Quince's throat. The long, lean murderous fingers were closing on his windpipe, and although the more powerful of the two men, he was nearly strangled in the suddenness of the onslaught.

Next moment, however, Quince had wrenched himself free of his assailant, and hurling him to the ground, planted his foot on his throat, as on that of a writhing, venomous snake. Latimer's bolt was shot, the will without the power to harm alone remaining.

"Take my life," he muttered sullenly; "it has no further value in my eyes."

"Get up," cried Paul Quince, thrusting the recumbent form with his foot.

The disgraced Professor obeyed. The kick was too imperative to be disregarded.

"Your miserable life is safe," resumed Quince, "and if I refrain from exposing your infamy, it is that you are under the direction of an influence that, though powerless over the generous and the true, can, when in contact with a mundane and debased organism, impel it to hellish and inextinguishable crime. The talisman you would sell your soul to monopolise would, with its evil promptings, have brought you to the gibbet. It is a safe possession only with those of higher aims and aspirations, and who do not look upon the aggrandisement of self as the sole end and object of their being."

Then turning upon the sullen and humiliated Professor a glance of profound contempt: "Begone," he cried, "and no longer pollute my house with your covetous and ungrateful presence."

He waved his hand, and Latimer, thankful to be released from the terrible ordeal, slunk away, and picking up his hat in the hall, wandered out into the dawn of a chill December morning.

He walked doggedly on down the drive through the wood, instinct, rather than conscious volition, directing his steps towards Bolton-le-Moor. He was thinly shod, but the road was dry enough, and on reaching the railway station he sat humbly down on a bench to wait for a train. It did not occur to him to comfort himself with a cup of coffee and mouthful of breakfast at the buffet, nor did he even draw near the fire of slack, but cowered like a beaten dog without spirit to move from the spot where he had taken refuge. He had "saved himself," as our neighbours say, in what he stood up in only, and did not remember till later that he had left his dressing-bag behind.

He could not have told if it were a long or short time that he had occupied that sordid bench, ere a porter roused him with an inquiry of whether he were going by "her," pointing to the smoke of an approaching locomotive.

The ticket-office window was drawn back with a click, and the Professor rose and took a place to London. Then entering a first-class carriage, he tumbled into a corner, and again relapsed into moody reverie.

Usually the Professor was very careful of his health, being subject to bronchial affections and liable to chills; but though he remembered having been unable to bring away his great-coat, its absence on this wintry morning gave him no concern. Presently it occurred to him that he would have to meet the Mayor at Clough, and arrange for a future lecture, and he felt for his engagement book. It was not in his pocket, and he then recollected having left it in the dressing-bag on his bedroom table in that terrible abode of French cooks, exalted hosts, disgrace and ruin; somehow the loss of his bag

seemed the greatest calamity of all. The fact echoed in his brain with incessant iteration ; but it did not occur to him that his engagement book would not be immediately required as the Mayor did not expect him by so early a train.

Presently he experienced a sudden feeling of chilliness as though a rush of cold air had entered the carriage. What a dark morning ! The lamp was still burning in the receptacle above ; another few minutes and the train drew up on the platform.

"Clough ! Clough !" shouted the porters ; "change here for ——" etc. etc.

Latimer looked out, and several hats were doffed to him. Why, surely there was the Mayor, and half the corporation at his back !

It was indeed that civic dignitary, accompanied by the lecture committee, all come to receive their Professor !

"Welcome, distinguished sir !" cried a stout, florid-looking man, rushing to the window and grasping Latimer's hand. The Mayor was a worshipper of talent, and had an ornate way of expressing himself.

It was all incomprehensible to the Professor, but his latest dominant idea was still in the ascendant.

"I have lost my luggage," he said, in dull, monotonous tones.

"You don't say so ! Where can I wire to ? What is it ?"

"A dressing-bag, which contains all my notes, and a great coat."

The Mayor gave a gesture of despair at the first loss, but glanced dubiously at a thick frieze over-all that enveloped the geologist.

"There is a bag right over the gentleman's head," observed a porter.

"Great heaven !" ejaculated the Professor ; "how did it get there ?"

"All's well that ends well," said the Mayor, with a curious glance at his guest. "Come along ; there won't be too much time for dinner."

The Professor had not heard this incomprehensible speech, his gaze being riveted on the train he had left, where at one of the windows appeared a head with auburn beard and hazel eyes, in which came a momentary gleam of drollery as their owner slightly raised his hat, and the train moved off.

"Who is that ?" screamed the Professor, clutching the porter with a terrible oath, and pointing to the still visible cause of his agitation.

"The gent as travelled with you, sir ?"

"I travelled alone the whole of the way from Bolton-le-Moor."

"Wigsby," corrected the porter ; "that there gent got in with you at the junction, and only changed to a smoker ten minutes ago."

"Come away," cried the Mayor, taking Latimer by the arm, whose strange language and wild air were beginning to attract attention. "It is but a step to my house."

The stupefaction of that civic functionary may be better imagined than described when he found that his distinguished guest had come with no expectation of delivering the lecture anticipated with such enthusiasm, and from whose demeanour he felt serious misgivings that the Professor was either on the verge of fever, or suffering from incipient softening of the brain.

However, after partaking of a good plain dinner and a bottle of champagne, Latimer pulled himself together sufficiently to be taken to the Town Hall, where, assisted by his notes, the power of habit enabled him to get through the programme without a fiasco. The chairman in proposing a vote of thanks declared they had been listening to a deeply-interesting and instructive disquisition, but it was afterwards generally remarked that the lecture had been totally devoid of the vigorous language and incisive reasoning usually so conspicuous in the brilliant Professor's orations.

The Mayor noticing the continued wandering and uneasy expression of his guest's eye, hurried him away from the Town Hall, and prevailing on him to swallow a potion sufficiently potent to ensure dreamless slumbers, had next morning the satisfaction of seeing him off with apparently recovered equanimity.

But it was on the return journey that our professor sustained a shock which accomplished the complete restoration of his faculties, while steeping his soul in impotent frenzy! In a pocket of his ulster he came upon a twisted note in unfamiliar writing, which upon being opened was found to contain the following strange communication, every sentence of which stung the recipient like whipcord:—

"PROFESSOR LATIMER,—Conceiving it a regrettable circumstance that an eminent man should be the victim of narrow-minded prejudice, I have ventured on a daring experiment. By a small ruse I induced you to concentrate your attention and gaze on a glittering though valueless crystal. In three minutes your eyelids closed, your features became convulsed, and you fell into a state of profound hypnotism. I have seldom experimented on a more sensitive organism, or on one more open to suggested hallucination! Your trance has lasted a quarter of an hour. I am now about to release you from it, and shall then change carriages, to enable you at your leisure to adjust to the more prosaic conditions of real life the suggested adventures you have passed through.

"Trusting that you will, in consideration of the novel experience you have acquired, pardon having been made an involuntary exponent of how narrow is the line of demarcation between the Seen and the Unseen, I am, with every feeling of respect, your humble servant and fellow-traveller—PAUL QUINCE."

CARL'S CHRISTMAS.

AN AMERICAN STORY.

IT was six o'clock on a cold November evening ; snow lay on the ground ; a few flakes were falling through the clear air.

Before a mansion in Fifth Avenue a gentleman paced, irresolute ; his eye dwelt anxiously on one window in particular, across which the shadow of a woman was sometimes thrown. Presently a hand drew back the curtain, and a face looked forth into the street.

"She is not looking for me," said he bitterly. "Ah ! how shall I tell her ?"

He almost staggered as he mounted the steps to the door, and even then stood irresolute, latch-key in hand, ere he entered the house.

"Is that you, Carl ?" said a sweet voice.

"Yes ; I am late."

"Then you must make haste ; we dine out to-night."

The speaker came forward to the lighted hall : a beautiful woman, whose exquisite toilette glittered with gems. He turned from the vision with something like a shudder.

"How shall I tell her ?" he murmured, as he wearily mounted the stairs.

He rang the bell as he entered his room.

"Tell Mrs. Hyde I am indisposed. I shall not be able to accompany her this evening."

The message sent, he sat down and buried his face in his hands. His thoughts roved idly to the visions of his youth, in which he, supremely happy in a loving wife, hewed down every obstacle in his path and made himself a famous man. What was the reality, he bitterly asked himself. He had deliberately married a woman who had frankly assured him she could never love him—he had thought he could give all and demand nothing in exchange. He shuddered as he recalled the loneliness and dreariness of his one year of married life.

A knock at the door interrupted these reflections ; his wife stood there as he answered the summons, and his eyes, blinded by her dazzling beauty, discerned no new expression in the haughty face.

"You are ill ?"

He did not reply ; he stood looking down on her as one in a dream.

"Your room here is cold," she said. "It is a bitter night. Will you not come to my boudoir ? The fire is pleasant there."

He stared at her, then shook his head.

"I have often told you," he said with scorn, "that I cannot breathe in such luxurious surroundings. My tastes are simple."

She glanced round his room, which, in comparison with hers, was simplicity itself.

"Then, if I cannot do anything for you," she began —

The carriage is waiting, madam," said a servant, approaching.

"I shall return early," she said. "Au revoir."

Again he was left to his bitter thoughts. Too restless to keep still, he wandered about the house from one magnificent room to another. At length he entered the boudoir, in the furnishing of which an expensively artistic taste was visible. He cast a scornful look on the luxurious room.

"It smothers me," he muttered.

His eyes, which restlessly wandered from one thing to another, now rested on a half-finished portrait, which, short-sighted though he was, he perceived to be of a man's face. For a long time he hesitated to approach nearer—it was mean to take advantage of his wife's absence; yet as he thought thus he moved, he peered into the pictured face. He started back in intense surprise—the colour rushed over his face.

"Do you think it good?" said his wife's voice at his side. For the hours had passed, and she had returned, and he was now looking at it for the tenth time.

"I am too much surprised at your choice of a subject to be able to give a critical opinion," he replied.

"Your head makes a fine study," she remarked calmly.

He bit his lip with a cruel sense of her coldness.

"You are surprised to find me here?"

"A little. But come to the fire; you have a thoroughly chilled appearance. Stephens tells me you have not dined. I have ordered a light repast for you. You can take it here."

He was conscious of feeling cold and faint; she drew him forward to an easy-chair; and the tray with food and wine appearing as though by magic, he found himself eating and drinking at her request, and he glanced up more than once inquiringly into her eyes. He read nothing there to lighten his heart.

She took up a piece of embroidery, and sewed diligently.

"By the way," she remarked, in a casual manner, "is it true that the Middleton Bank has stopped payment? Have you not shares in it?"

He made no reply; her eyes met his with some anxiety.

"My whole fortune was invested there," he replied.

"Then you are ruined?" she said, calmly.

"Utterly."

Both were silent then. Isabel's eyes glanced round the luxurious room, then she looked at her husband.

"I suppose it will not affect any of my personal property," she

said anxiously. "You do not know, I believe, that my Uncle Aaron, who died a week ago, has left me his homestead."

"No! I was not aware of it. Where is it?"

"Oh! A farm out in the country," she replied, flushing under his intent gaze.

"You will not be destitute then, even if I fail to earn money at once," he said with keen sarcasm.

"That is well," she said quietly.

"You were frank when I asked you to marry me. You said you would do so to escape poverty—to assure yourself a life of luxury. You said I was not the type of man you could ever love."

"Have you remembered my foolish words?" asked she, flushing.

He laughed bitterly. "A man does not easily forget such words as those," he said. "On my part, I promised never to obtrude my love for you."

"I absolve you from any idea that you have ever done so," she replied coldly.

"I promised to keep you as a princess; you were only to wish, and your wishes should be fulfilled. Have I hitherto kept my promise?"

"Every tangible wish has been gratified," she said gravely.

"At least you do me justice," he said, rising to his feet. "But *now* the failure of this bank makes it impossible to me to continue my practice of forestalling your wishes."

"You will have to give up this home?"

"Certainly! It takes a princely income to keep up."

"Will everything have to be sold?"

"Everything of value belongs to my creditors."

There was silence.

"What will you do after the sale?"

"I have not had time to think. Possibly I may go out West as soon as I can make arrangements for your comfort here."

"It would be a good plan," she remarked quietly. "You appear to like an outdoor life. You enjoy farming, do you not?"

"My father was a farmer. I inherit an instinct for outdoor pursuits."

She yawned a little and looked bored. He hastily rose and went away, bitterly hurt.

"At last!" she cried triumphantly; "at last!" She sang a merry little roulade as she moved about the room. He heard it in the distance.

"She can sing when I am in such trouble. It is too cruel!"

A few days later, he found her busied in packing her trunks.

"I am going to make a few visits while you are arranging for the sale," she said. "You may not hear from me often for a few weeks, but I shall be safe and in good hands."

There was a pitiful appeal in his eyes—which might have gone to the heart of any woman—not to desert him in this bitter hour. His lips moved voicelessly, as if he would have made an appeal. She turned away and went on with her packing.

When he came back that evening she was gone. Every little token of her personal presence had vanished as though it had never been there. He received two short letters during the next few weeks: just an assurance that she was comfortably situated. As she gave him no address, he did not attempt to answer her letters.

Two days before Christmas he received another letter from her.

"I am at a village called Sharon," she wrote. "It is important to my comfort that you come to me at once. Take the train from the city which arrives here at six p.m. A sleigh will be waiting for you. Come to-morrow—Christmas eve."

He had just time to catch the train; for the letter had been delayed on its road to him. As he rode on through the gathering gloom he mused sadly enough on his future. The heart seemed gone from his efforts to begin life again. For whom should he work? For a woman whose whole soul was wrapt up in self, in love of ease and luxury?

"I am the kind of man no woman would love," he said to himself. "Yet I am not without the qualities which should command esteem. I am incapable of an insincerity; to love once is to love eternally with me—should I have done the bidding of this calm, selfish woman to-night did I love her less?"

Arrived at Sharon he was instantly accosted by a man who said he had brought a sleigh to meet him. Then he was driven swiftly for miles over the crusted snow—too moody in humour to care to talk to his silent driver.

"That's the house—where you see them lights; she has lights in every window, I guess," said the man as he drove up to the door of a quaint, old-fashioned farm-house.

The door opened as if by magic, and Carl stumbled blindly into the lighted hall. The door closed behind him.

"Welcome home, dear Carl," said a sweet voice at his side. His beautiful wife stood there, her eyes dancing with fun—and—and—what else did this stupid Carl begin to read in those lustrous eyes?

"Isabel!" he cried. He suddenly bent down over her—as her soft arms clasped his neck.

"Oh, Isabel! am I dreaming?" he cried as he clasped her close.

"Take off this wet coat," she replied, "and come into the kitchen. Do you think you could eat your supper just once in the kitchen, Carl—because you know I am going to cook it for you."

"Only tell me where we are. Is this Heaven—have we died suddenly—or am I wandering in dreams of a bliss that might be mine if—if—Isabel loved me?"

"There is no if," said she, drawing him to the glowing fire. "Oh! my love—how blind you have been. I have loved you for many a long month—but how could I tell you so—when you *would* believe I cared only for the presents you lavished on me. Carl, this is my home—and I give it to you—it is Uncle Aaron's old farm and homestead. Won't this do as well as going out West? He died leaving me this and all his immense wealth—wealth no one dreamed of his possessing."

"This is indeed a blessed Christmas eve," said Carl, unwilling to lose his wife for an instant from his sight—and following her from pantry to kitchen as she bustled about her housewifely duties.

Ah! what an hour of bliss followed the cosy supper—how much to tell, how much to hear, what arrears of loving confidences to be made up!

And what a Christmas Day was that which followed—what a truly Divine service that which they so gratefully attended in the morning! Blissfully the day sped by—and plans for the future and bright visions of the happiness to be theirs filled their cup to the brim.

God speed them on their journey onward—sorrows will pass lightly over their heads, for they love one another.



THE HARVEST OF THE SEA.

THE sky is black with angry clouds
 Just when the day is dying;
 The gulls sweep by like ghosts in shrouds
 Before the tempest flying.
 But the fish, they say, are in the bay:
 No matter then the weather!
 For all must toil to reap the spoil
 That keeps the home together.

Just like a busy hive of bees
 In bustle and commotion,
 So swarm both young and old to seize
 The harvest of the ocean.
 So blow, old wind! you are but kind
 To bring such angry weather,
 When all can toil to reap the spoil
 That keeps the home together!

GEORGE WEATHERLY.



From the Painting by R. H. Carter, R.I.

THE HARVEST OF THE SEA.



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DIVIDED.

BY KATHERINE CARR.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT CAMPER.

IF truth be known, I believe Madame Lenard was less surprised at Denise's involuntary confession of love for Raoul than Denise was herself.

She had so long fought, half unconsciously, against the feeling, that it is impossible to say how long pride would have forced her to ignore it, had she not been completely unhinged, and in a nervous state of excitability. As it was, her presentiment (for such she firmly believed it to be) raised her into that kind of exaltation which sometimes urges us to actions we should consider wildly extravagant in our calmer moments.

If it is true that much evil is wrought by sudden passions, it is none the less a fact that they also work a great deal of good. Breaches are mended, misunderstandings cleared, divided hearts brought together by these rare bursts of emotion, when it seems as if the barriers of conventionality are for once broken, so that we may be our true selves, our heart secrets laid bare, for one moment, in the light of honest passion.

Now when for some unaccountable reason Denise imagined that between her and Raoul stood the stern angel death, her remorse made it evident to her that in spite of her long resistance Raoul had conquered.

Even during that miserable autumn at Camper he had been steadily winning his way into her affections, unknown to them both.

Most women, worthy the name (and they are not so common as some people fancy), cannot refrain from attaching themselves, more or less, to anyone with whom they live for long together, sharing the same daily life, and on whom they are dependent, especially if it is one who loves them. Custom and habit are firmer cements than one realises; and if there is one proverb more than another that is often distinctly at fault, it is the hackneyed one to the effect that "Familiarity breeds contempt." Familiarity does, sometimes, teach us to condemn our own intolerance of other people's little faults and foibles, that are atoned for by virtues which our uncharitableness refuses at first to notice.

This, in a great measure, was the case with Denise de Kériadec.

Raoul's faults were external ones, the faults of youth which

outgrow themselves. It was impossible to associate long with him without acknowledging the real nobility and *largeness* of his character. But persistent snubbing and ill-concealed dislike do not draw out a man's best nature; on the contrary, they suppress it, and provoke him to smother his feelings under coldness and anger, and a bitterness that turns everything to gall.

At one time it only wanted a kind word from Denise to induce Raoul to pour out before her the whole wealth of his heart. But as she would not speak the word, in despair he sealed up the fervour of his love, with a half-desperate hope that it would die of suffocation.

But it was not only his affection and the fine traits of his character that won Denise's respect. Women are strange creatures, and are often touched where you would least expect it. With Denise, it was Raoul's *strength* that fascinated, first her imagination, then her heart.

In all he did or said there was such a vigorous element, such an overpowering personality. The strength of his passions, even of his anger, awed, and, simply from the novelty of being awed, impressed her, made her feel half proud that her husband was so much more powerful, physically and morally, than other women's husbands. It showed her her own insignificance and helplessness.

That never-to-be-forgotten night of the storm had completed Raoul's victory. She could not forget the tender strength of his arms when he carried her so swiftly up the steep cliff, a young Goliath, in whose power she was as a child. But it was too late then. She had repulsed him too far, his love for her was fast dying. So she dared not speak of the change that had come over her; and went from him in shame and anger that she had given so much as one relenting thought to a man who had grown tired of her.

All these memories returned to Denise during her long, solitary journey.

As is so often the case in retrospection, she forgot the real troubles and discontents that had weighed so heavily on her at the time, and instead of long dreary winter hours when wind and rain dulled the landscape, only recalled Raoul's goodness to her, only fair summer days when sea and land were bathed in golden glory.

She had a long night journey before her. Madame Lenard had tried to persuade her to delay her departure until the next morning. But Denise impatiently begged her not to detain her. She felt convinced that her presentiment had been sent to her for some definite purpose, and that for one thing, it imperatively urged her to return at once to Camper.

Put into words, her vision, if such it was, did not convey very much.

It was merely such a scene as was very likely to haunt her imagination after what she had witnessed the last night she was at Camper. It was a windy sea—a capsized boat—Raoul swimming for dear life, against wind and tide. His face, as she had seen it in

that transient moment, was that of a drowning man, white and haggard; with wide, blank eyes. And this picture haunted her like a horrible dream.

"It may be that I am to be of some use in saving him," she thought, "or it *may* be that I shall find I am labouring under a delusion, and that he has been in no peril at all. If so——"

If so, the question was, how would he receive her? He could not be expected to welcome her with open arms. Possibly her reappearance would only seem to him a tactless intrusion, more of an annoyance than a pleasure.

At one time Denise would have died rather than subject herself to the possibility of an ignominious rejection of her proffered friendship. But now that she had at last allowed herself to love, it was only consistent with her impulsiveness that she should dare all, risk all, for the sake of her love. If she was to be humiliated, so be it. She deserved it. And whether or not he cared to receive her regret and love, she was determined to offer it to him, if only to prove that it was honest and sincere enough to run the chance of being repudiated, for the sake of the forlorn hope of being accepted.

She did not sleep for more than half-an-hour at a time during the whole of that long night journey. If ever she fell into a doze, she awoke at once, in horrible fear and agony, haunted, even in sleep, by Raoul's drowning face. She could picture to herself the sea in the Bay of Audierne, lashed into fury and dashing against the rocks. Do what she would, she was unable to shut her ears to the rising wind, or her mind to the vivid scenes conjured up by her overwrought brain.

There are certain days and hours in our life when we seem, with one stride, to gain greater mental and moral experience than in the ordinary course of events we acquire in several years. This was one of those periods to Denise. She felt that the very intensity of her thoughts aged her. She saw how petty, how vain, how puerile her life's interests had been, compared with the deep and vast questions that assail one when death is brought vividly before the mind. What was the use of wasting breath in futile strivings after a self-gratification, that after all is said and done is only a "vanity of vanities," counting for absolutely nothing when weighed with the long felicity of life after death? What good had she ever done to any human soul? She had accepted much love and kindness as her due, because she was blessed with beauty, youth, charm. But she had given very little in return. Perhaps it is difficult for a clever and pretty woman to avoid egotism; it is one of her privileges, just as selfishness is that of man. And it is true that Denise had not been without a good deal of youthful arrogance in her dealings with a world which had conspired to spoil and indulge her to the top of her bent.

When she arrived at Quimper, the nearest railway station to

Camper, it was a dull, oppressive morning, with fitful gusts of a dry, unrefreshing wind. Even to Denise's unpractised eyes it was evident that a storm was brooding, and her impatience grew more and more uncontrollable.

There was no vehicle waiting at the station, so she hurried to the little inn usually patronised by Monsieur de Kériadec, and, regardless of the inquisitive glances of the proprietor and his wife at her sudden appearance, requested them to order a fiacre to be got ready with all possible speed.

Twenty minutes later, the lumbering old vehicle, drawn by its antiquated white horses with bells jingling on their harness, was brought round with a great bustle and clatter, all the inmates of the inn peering at Madame de Kériadec as she drove away, and conjecturing as to the cause of her sudden return.

"It is the way of these fine Parisiennes," said the proprietress; "they are as full of caprices as a gooseberry-bush of berries. It was a bad day for Monsieur de Kériadec when he went out of Brittany to seek a wife."

Stolid Jacques, the driver, afterwards confirmed this judgment of Madame de Kériadec by declaring that he had never before driven and hoped never again to drive so impatient and eccentric a lady. His sober old horses had started in fine style *au galop*; but only for a few hundred yards; then Jacques laid aside his whip, rounded his shoulders, settled himself in a comfortable semi-somnolent state, and let them pursue the slow and melancholy pace to which they were accustomed.

No wonder Denise fumed and fretted. Had she possessed wings they could not have borne her fast enough to satisfy her craving. In most extravagant terms she implored Jacques to urge on his precious horses, promising him *pour-boires* without limit if only he would exert himself. After each appeal, Jacques roused himself with a start, a "Bien, madame," and cracked his whip in the air; there was a feeble spurt for three minutes, then a return to that funereal and torturing jog-trot.

It was a long, desolate drive at that time of year; to Denise it had never before seemed so interminable, even when Raoul had fetched her away from Paris, an unwilling prisoner. Half-way there, Jacques insisted on stopping to change horses, during which delay her impatience could hardly be controlled; the only consolation was that the fresh horses might go a shade faster than the poor old white ones; at all events, they could not go slower.

She was still within a mile or two of the Château de Kériadec when the storm broke, and a deluge of rain beat down upon the rickety old fiacre. Denise had always had a kind of physical fear of thunder; but now she was too much occupied with other anxieties to pay much heed to it, beyond thinking, with a superstitious sinking of the heart, that the coincidence argued ill for her errand.

"Ridiculous," she said to herself; "I must have caught the Breton superstitiousness. He is probably safe at home."

How well she remembered her last drive to the Château, the clear moonlight night and silvery sea! And how different it had been in all respects from the present one! Now all was dark, wet and stormy, the sea wrapped in cloud and mist, and the Château hidden in blinding rain, except when a fierce flash of lightning lit it up in fiery splendour.

When she drew near enough to distinguish anything distinctly, Denise saw certain signs of life that did not serve to reassure her. The huge entrance door was open, Gustave, the old man-servant, and Diane, the housekeeper, were talking together in the hall with apparent excitement. When they heard the unexpected sound of carriage wheels, they both hurried to the door, and their unfeigned surprise when they recognised their mistress deprived them of all power of speech for the moment.

The instant the carriage stopped, Denise opened the door and sprang out.

"Eh bien! Diane, you see I have come back," she said, trying to conceal her anxiety. "You did not expect me, did you? Where is your master?"

"Ciel!" ejaculated Diane; "if it is not madame herself!"

Gustave, man-like, was hiding behind his wife, lest madame should direct her questions to himself.

"Tell me!" she repeated. Then, unable to contain herself, she cried: "Where is my husband? I entreat you, answer me."

"Madame—control yourself—have patience. It is not the first time monsieur has been at sea in a storm—yes—in worse storms than this, *ma foi!*"

"This? This is child's play to him, madame," put in Gustave.

"Then he is out in his boat? Where? When did he go? Who was with him?"

"It was about noon that he started. It was then calm as a mill-pond. Trust me, madame, there is no cause for alarm. He has a good head on his shoulders, has monsieur. If we looked a little bit anxious, it was not on his account. Mademoiselle Yvonne was with him. It is for her that we were disturbed, madame."

"Does no one know which direction they took?"

"Gustave has it in his head that they went towards Penmarch, madame. But who knows? One boat is much like another boat."

Denise was silent for a moment. When next she spoke she was cool and collected. The course to be pursued was as clear as daylight to her.

"You say he went towards Penmarch. He will have turned back before the storm actually began, and have been overtaken by it before he could reach Camper. It is quite evident to me what

he will do. He will attempt to come into the Baie des Nains, and so land on the other side of the promontory. That will be his action—I am convinced of it. You know what monsieur is! He is so rash that one can never count on what he will do. But, in this case, I am *certain*. *Allons*, Jacques! There is not a moment to be lost. Drive quickly towards Camper, and stop at the fisherman's cottage at the top of the cliff. Only for Heaven's sake make haste. Drive, Jacques—drive for your life!"

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Diane, as Denise drove away as suddenly as she had come; "she is incomprehensible, this young madame! One day too fine to move from the fireside with her books and her smart clothes and her little fancies! The next, flying off on a fool's errand when the sky is roaring fit to burst! What will she do next? She keeps us all alive, there is no denying that, with her caprices."

Even stolid Jacques was fired by Denise's vigour and decision, and did his best to keep his horses up to the mark. He did not quite grasp the situation, and thought madame very excitable. But he began to feel that if Monsieur de Kériadec was really in danger, it was he, Jacques, who was destined to rescue him. So, with all the ardour of a hero, he cracked his whip, and shook his reins, and shouted *Hue!* with might and main until he was hoarse.

Denise had made her plans with the prompt decision of a general.

She knew that Raoul had infinite confidence in his knowledge of the dangerous shores round his home. More than once she had heard him boast that he could pilot his boat into the Baie des Nains on the stormiest, darkest night possible, and that for him the bay was as safe as his own bed.

But the chief reason of her conviction that he would make for the Baie des Nains was, that it was the very spot indicated in her vision; and not to be there on the *chance* of an emergency would have seemed to her a direct tempting of Providence. Even if Raoul accomplished the feat in safety, as he had often done before, her presence could do no harm. In that case she herself would be the only person who need feel awkward. It would be humiliating to meet him and Yvonne in such a strange, unexpected way—perhaps to be treated as an unwelcome intruder. But she was prepared to be humiliated; and having come so far on her chimerical errand, it was useless to draw back now that she was so near the end.

In a little cottage on the cliff lived one of the ablest and most trustworthy of Raoul's dependents, a fisherman called Hoël, who had been his earliest initiator into the craft of seamanship and the secrets of deep sea fishing. To Hoël Denise determined to appeal for help. She knew he was to be relied upon where "M'sieu Raoul" was concerned; whilst for courage and promptitude in danger he fell little short of Raoul himself.

When honest Hoël came out of his little one-windowed cottage, and saw Denise standing at his door, amidst thunder and lightning, his first thought was that a korriçan, or some other child of the elements, had come to pay him a gruesome visit. And when reassured by the very material reality of Jacques and the lumbering fiacre he recognised Madame de Kériadec, his astonishment scarcely abated. Where had she sprung from? What could she want with him now, when all weak women were best shut up in their own houses?

Denise hurriedly, but lucidly, explained her object. At the first mention of possible danger to Raoul, Hoël was all attention, quick to grasp her meaning without wasting time in asking useless questions, and ready to follow her whithersoever she chose to take him.

The situation was as clear to him as it was to her. Monsieur had gone out in his boat, somewhere in the direction of Penmarch. A storm had arisen, which would make it well nigh impossible to round the promontory. Therefore, being Raoul de Kériadec, he would probably make for the Baie des Nains rather than lie out at sea until the storm dropped.

"It may be a useless precaution on my part," added Denise, "but I have a fancy—a superstition. You, being a Breton, will not laugh at that. I want you to come with me to the Baie des Nains. It is possible that we may be of service, and there is not time to get more help from the village. Do you understand?"

"*Parfaitement*, madame. Jacques will drive you across the promontory; but beyond that the road ends. Madame will have to walk."

"Yes; I am ready. Now get in. Oh, don't hang back as if you were afraid of me. I am not too fine to drive with you. That is right. Now, Jacques, drive where Hoël bids you."

As they drove along the top of the cliff they could see the waves below washing noisily against the rocks, the spray turned into dancing blue demons by the rapid lightning flashes that rent the darkness and mist.

They were soon within sight of the Baie des Nains. Here the carriage road abruptly terminated, and a precipitous path led down to the sandy beach at the head of the little cove.

After he had helped Denise to alight, Hoël scanned the gloomy scene with his keen and practised eyes.

"Madame was right," he said after a second; "there is the *Bon Espoir*; can madame distinguish it? It is making for the bay. He is rash, M'sieur Raoul; but the saints look over him, and luck has always been on his side. Do not agitate yourself, madame."

"Quick! Let us go down," cried Denise. "Oh, mon Dieu! it is indeed my vision coming true. Quick, Hoël! or we shall be too late!"

The path was rough and steep. In the semi-darkness it was diffi-

cult to see where to place one's foot. But Denise required no aid from her companion. His opinion of Madame de Kériadec increased tenfold when he noted how active she could be in spite of her appearance of grande dame. She seemed to rise to the occasion, and however agitated she might be inwardly, she was outwardly collected, with all her faculties about her.

By the time they reached the beach, with its great boulders of rock jutting out to sea, they could plainly distinguish the little sailing-boat drawing near to the narrow inlet.

"He will be safe enough if he can manage the boat," said Hoël; "he knows every rock on the coast. Anyone else would be mad to try it."

"He *is* mad when he is on the sea. I have always said it would be his fate," groaned Denise; "cannot we get nearer to the passage in case he has need of help?"

"I can clamber over the rocks. But madame——"

Hoël glanced significantly at her long, fur-trimmed coat and delicate boots.

"Then go. Do not think of me. I will follow as best I can. Ah, my good Hoël, make haste. In a few minutes they will be in the pass—and, if he should make a mistake——"

"*Bien*, madame, I will go. But reassure yourself; monsieur Raoul never makes a mistake. Did I not teach him to manage a boat myself?"

But for once Hoël was at fault.

It is averred by many people that no man makes a mistake without a woman being at the bottom of it; and we have already seen that, in Raoul's case, if he did not actually commit a blunder himself, a woman did so for him.

Just before Yvonne made the fatal movement that dashed the *Bon Espoir* against the rocks, Raoul had suddenly felt himself yielding to the spell of her strange devotion—a devotion of which, until that moment, he had been blindly ignorant, too much absorbed in his own troubles to pay any heed to the vain fancies of his girl-companion.

If, in this momentary lapse from his self-constraint, there was even the suspicion of a faint disloyalty to the memory of his wife, his awakening was a rude one; and even during the first shock he was conscious of a vague feeling of contrition, and of vexation at his density of perception. But this was not the time for any thoughts save those of self-preservation; and though Raoul felt that there was no danger for him, he cursed himself for his rashness in attempting what he knew to be a risky undertaking when he had a woman in his charge.

Yvonne was a good swimmer, and too well inured to dangers of the sea to lose her presence of mind in an emergency. She knew, as well as Raoul did, where it was feasible to effect a landing, and

where it was not. At the spot where they had met with the accident the low rocks sloped, smooth and slippery, into the water; without assistance from shore it would be mere waste of energy to attempt a landing there. But a little farther inland there was a narrow stretch of sand, whence Yvonne had often bathed, summer after summer; and there, if she could swim the distance, she would be in safety. It was only a matter of physical strength, and, with Raoul at hand to render aid if her power of endurance failed, there was reasonable hope that the waves would again be cheated of their prey, as had so often been the case when Raoul was in question. He seemed, as the people of Camper said, to bear a charmed life, proof against storm and sea; and there was a kind of fascination and excitement to the girl in the proud knowledge that she was sharing his peril, and showing him that *she* was not afraid of fighting bravely and well for her life.

When he called out to her not to be frightened, and that he would save her, her answer rang back like a cry of joy:

"Do not fear for me; I am safe enough. I like it—I like it!"

She had the heart of a lion the little Breton girl. Though the waves thrust her back, and the surf blinded and deafened her, she fought steadily and undauntedly, with perfect confidence in Raoul, who was close at hand to save her if she gave a sign of failing breath or fainting limbs.

But there was no occasion for his help.

Hoël, leaning over the low rock, close to the scene of the disaster, was ready to drag her into safety; a few steady strokes would bring her within his reach, and with the help of his strong arms, it would be easy for her, agile as she was, to scale the slippery rock.

When Raoul heard the well-known voice of his favourite, Hoël, and saw dimly through the beating rain two figures standing at the edge of the rock, he sent back an answering shout of glad relief. Thank God! Yvonne, at least, would be safe. For himself, what mattered it? A curious numbness was creeping over his limbs. Was his strength forsaking him now, on so slight a trial? He laughed low to himself—"They will think my nine lives have come to an end at last," he thought. "What a number of alarms I have given the good fellows in the course of my life. Ah! Yvonne is safe. And I will not be conquered yet. Phew! what logs my legs feel. I am going to be beaten at last, by Heaven! Well, I must fight for it."

Whether, as the boat capsized, he had sustained a severe blow on the head, or whether he had already over-exhausted himself by his long row, he could not tell; probably the former. He was fully conscious that his life hung in the balance. His breath came in hard, hurried gasps. How the spray choked and blinded him! How terribly his back and legs ached, as he struggled against the tossing waves! Was this death? No wonder so many brave fellows shrank from it. It was horrible to feel so helpless, horrible to be suffocated

in this way, horrible to go into the silence and darkness—young, strong, and full of life. What was that? A voice crying to him through the agony of his faintness—"Raoul! Raoul!" Who was it? It was like the voice of Denise, strangely like. And yet it could not be hers. It was only a dream—sweet beyond all dreams. Where was he, where was he?

His head reeled, all strength and life fell from him. He had only time to fling out his arms towards the rock, with a blind hope that they would reach Hoël's outstretched hands before he sank back to death and darkness; and then a deadly faintness came over him, which wrapped him in a blissful unconsciousness of pain and sorrow and life itself.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIFE OR DEATH?

It was not until Raoul was out of danger, and lying on the rock, supported by Hoël, that Yvonne fully realised the presence of Madame de Kériadec. Her first feeling of astonishment was quickly succeeded by an outraged sense of defeat, which made her veins tingle with the old bitter dislike and jealousy.

By what right was Denise here, to defraud her of her friendship with Raoul, which was beginning to have such a sweet and strange significance?

She sprang forward, as Denise moved impulsively towards her husband, and forcing her back with her strong little arms, stood between her and Raoul, as though guarding him from one who would do him an injury.

"You must not let him see you," she cried, hurriedly; "he does not know you are here. It would be a shock to him to see you so suddenly."

"Oh, have some pity," exclaimed Denise passionately, thrusting her aside; "let me go to him."

She was trembling from head to foot, exhausted in mind and body by her long suspense, and the agony of the last few minutes; and as she flung herself on her knees by the motionless form of her husband, she burst into a terrible anguish of tears.

All the dull misery of her short married life, with its follies, its vain longings, its heart-searing remorse and penitence, was poured out in that painful convulsion of sobs and tears.

Before such grief Yvonne stood silent and abashed, half moved to pity, half rejoicing in a kind of exultant sense of triumph.

"Courage, madame, courage," said Hoël, with rude sympathy. "It may not be so bad as all that. M'sieur Raoul would never be beat in a sea like this. It is nothing to what he is used to. If I carry him to my cottage, and get a dry rag on him, he'll come round fast enough, trust me."

As he altered his position, to raise his master in his arms, a spasm of pain passed over Raoul's features, and he moved, ever so slightly, opening his eyes with a faint gleam of consciousness. Denise held her breath, not daring to move. But Yvonne drew nearer, and bent over him with something of defiant possession in her manner. For a moment his eyes rested on Denise with dumb wonder and questioning; then, as Hoël lifted him in his arms, a groan of pain was wrung from between his lips, and the deadly pallor came again over his face.

"For Heaven's sake, do not move me," he murmured.

"We would take you home, Raoul," said Yvonne. "Can you bear to be carried?"

Before he could answer he had fainted again, and lay back very white and still.

"It is no use," said Hoël; "I must get assistance. For me to carry him over these rocks, alone, is impossible. If madame or mademoiselle will watch by him, I will hurry back to where the fiacre is waiting, and bring Jacques to help us."

"Yes; go quickly, quickly," said Denise, looking up at him imploringly. "Do you not see how wet and cold he is? You will come back soon, will you not, my good Hoël?"

Hoël always afterwards declared that madame had "such a way" with her, that if she chose to order a man to plunge into the Trou de l'Enfer at the Pointe du Raz, he would not hesitate to obey. The charm that had made Raoul her slave was none the less potent over the stolid heart of the rough fisherman; and when he saw her divest herself of her warm fur coat, and lay it tenderly over Raoul, he said to himself that the fine ladies of Paris had their virtues after all, and their hearts in the right place.

Yvonne glanced at the warm covering a little scornfully.

"Will it not spoil it?" she asked sarcastically; "look at the rain! you will catch cold."

"We cannot let him perish with cold," answered Denise quietly, ignoring the implied insult, and moving to take Hoël's place. But Yvonne, with jealous haste, was before her, and now with Raoul's head supported on her knees, looked up at Denise with fierce, dark eyes.

"Why did you come back? We were happy; we did not want you," she said vehemently. "You, who left him when he was in health, what right have you to tend him now?"

Denise bowed her head in silence.

"I have no right," she whispered after a moment; "I have forfeited it."

Yvonne dropped her eyes. It was her hour of triumph. In her insensate folly she imagined that the look which had passed like lightning between her and Raoul had made him hers, by the inalienable tie of mutual love. Yet, as she saw Denise standing before her, so fair and pale and sad in her new humility, she knew, in the hidden

depths of her consciousness, that her hope was but the wildest of dreams. There could be no rivalry between her, a little brown elf without wit or charm, and Madame de Kériadec, with her beauty and soft womanly graces, all those outward attractions that weak man has worshipped in all ages and will go on worshipping till the end of time.

"Why did you come?" she repeated.

"I could not help it. I felt I must see him again—something called me back to him. But I can go away. He need not know I am here. I do not want to be in his way; but I thought—perhaps——"

"No, he does not want you. How should he? You, who have made his life what it is—a burden, a mistake, a terrible mistake. Why do you not go away?"

"He is my husband," said Denise softly, still speaking with curious forbearance; "it is for him to say if I am to go away."

"We were happy enough without you," repeated the girl with a sob.

Denise's lips parted to make a quick retort; then she checked herself. It was a strange and new experience for her, to be thus humiliated to the dust: a wife who could not claim the right to tend and comfort her own husband; forced to stand aside, with most trenchant remorse, whilst her place was taken by another woman, who, for all she knew, had usurped the affection she herself had so wilfully forfeited. Poor Denise! She had no pride left now; none of the flippant indifference, the careless gaiety and mockery that had at once maddened and delighted her husband.

She felt no anger with Yvonne. Perhaps in her heart of hearts she did not yet quite believe that anyone could be to Raoul what she had been. But at Yvonne's last words, an acute and hopeless feeling of desolation came over her, like the miserable blankness of despair.

"If what you say is true," she said under her breath, "may God forgive me."

"No, He will not! He cannot," cried Yvonne, tears raining down her face; "you do not deserve to be forgiven. Oh, I hate you! You know it."

"Yes, I know it. You have always hated me, even when I tried to be friends with you. You have been hard on me at times when you might have helped me. Do you think it has all been plain sailing to me? Yvonne, Yvonne, what makes you so unkind, so pitiless, so ungenerous? Cannot we forgive each other?" she ended, laying her hand gently on Yvonne's shoulder.

The girl shrank from her touch, and lowered her sullen eyes.

"Forgive?" she murmured; "what have you to forgive?"

Denise hesitated.

"Ces choses là ne se disent pas, elles se comprennent," she said gently.

There was a short silence. Denise, with her hands clasped before her, was looking dreamily at Raoul's quiet, white face. She had wept out her passion of remorse; she felt nothing now but a great, pure love, that seemed to flood her whole being, and raise her above all petty envy and malice.

Suddenly Yvonne stretched out her hands to her with a little moan.

"It is true that I hate you," she sobbed; "and yet I love you for your beauty and your sweetness. It is *that* that makes me hate you so. You will not *let* me be your enemy."

"And *you* will not let me be your friend," said Denise. "Is there reason in that?"

"You knew!" whispered Yvonne. "You knew that it was I who tried to ruin your character; I who sent that wretched story to the journal. Oh, I was mad when I did it. And yet you never told him! You cannot have, for if he had known, he would never have spoken to me again."

"Why should I tell him?"

"Ah! you are good and true and generous. I see that now. I would be your friend if I could; but it is impossible, impossible. If I love you for your beauty, there are other reasons why I cannot like you. Perhaps I am mad—sometimes I think it must be so. And yet—and yet——"

Denise took the feverish little hands in hers.

"Poor little Yvonne," she said, in her soft, low voice.

"Hush!" said Yvonne; "he is moving."

They were very silent, both watching with strained intensity for a sign of consciousness, of recognition from the man they loved. Then Raoul slowly opened his eyes, raising them vacantly, like one in a dream, to Denise, as she leant over him, tall and beautiful, with shining eyes.

The storm was dying away in the distance. A soft, cool rain was falling, and now and again a faint flash of far-away lightning cast a swift blue gleam across the sky.

To Raoul's slowly returning senses there was something dim and dreamlike in the misty twilight, in the shadowy face and form—so like Denise—in the strange faintness of heart and brain. Could it be—could it be anything but a dream—the sweet lips smiling so softly, the beloved eyes growing so tender, for *him*? No—it could not be. It was but one of those radiant visions the dying so often see. Yet he smiled back to her, and gasped out his passionate longing.

"Oh, Denise . . . love me!"

"I do—I do. My darling!" she cried.

And with these words ringing in his ears he swooned away, hanging, a dead weight, in his wife's arms, that were wound passionately round him.

CHAPTER XV.

HEARTS' LOVE.

YVONNE sprang up with a bitter cry of disappointment, the outcome of her frustrated hopes, her loneliness, her craving for love and sympathy.

In her anxiety for Raoul she had forgotten that she was drenched to the skin from head to foot; but as she stumbled blindly over the rocks, towards her home, she became conscious of the icy numbness of her limbs; her teeth were chattering with cold, her head burning feverishly. She had lost all self-control. The tears were raining pitifully down her cheeks, sobs choking her breath, and her heart bursting with conflicting emotions. Once she paused to look back at Raoul and Denise. They were all in all to each other. They had forgotten her. It is the prerogative of love to be selfish, and for those two just then no one existed in the world except each other.

"Ah! how happy they are," thought the girl; "how could I have believed that his love for her could ever die?"

Then she thought she heard Denise's voice calling to her: "Yvonne, Yvonne—come back," and she sped on again over the slippery rocks, scarcely heeding where she went so long as it led away from those two in their newly-found happiness.

She had almost forgotten her old hatred and jealousy in a sudden, shamed recognition of the sinfulness of her unreasoning devotion to Raoul. By all the means in her power she had striven to widen the breach between husband and wife. And for what end? What did she expect to gain? By what perverted arguments had she persuaded herself that she could add to Raoul's happiness after he had lost the chief object that made his life worth living?

For the last months she had been living in a fantasy, wild and unthinking; buying her experience of life with the passions of an uneducated and ill-regulated mind. The awakening from her mad dream to the humiliating reality was sharp and sudden; and in the revulsion of feeling, she was prostrated with horror at her own weakness and deceit.

Stumbling and slipping over the seaweed-covered rocks, she at length reached the little path leading up the cliff close to her home.

At the edge of the cliff loomed the old Menhir, grim and ghostly in the gloaming; and here, chilled and wet as she was, she knelt for a moment and laid her hot forehead against the cold grey stone.

Her lips moved mechanically; but no sound passed through them. Words failed her. She could only offer up a mute, inarticu-

late prayer for pardon and comfort; the passionate *mea culpa* of a heart that had broken itself against the bars of life.

When Yvonne reached her home, Mademoiselle Mathilde was knitting by the fire, in her puritanically plain and comfortless sitting-room, looking, with her severe, cold face, the personification of one of the *Parcæ* weaving the web of Fate.

But even she was startled out of her austere calm when the door burst open, and Yvonne entered, her wet clothes clinging to her figure, her wide, sad eyes glowing darkly out of the pallor of her face.

"*Mon Dieu!* What has happened? What have you been doing to yourself?" cried Mademoiselle Mathilde, dropping her knitting. "Of all tiresome, inconsiderate girls, I have always said you are the most incorrigible. Do you wish to catch your death of cold?"

"I have been with Raoul. We upset during the storm; that is all," said Yvonne absently. "He is safe; but perhaps he is going to be ill. I cannot tell. I am confused—I cannot remember."

"Ah, *Ciel!* What a terrible life we lead here!" ejaculated Mademoiselle Mathilde; "what with storms and wrecks one knows not who will be carried off next. It is like the selfishness of a man that your father should leave us here from year's end to year's end."

"Let us go away. Yes—I, too, am weary to death of being here," said the girl wildly, her cold, blue lips quivering. "I want to go away—away—far away from Camper. You are right. The life here is killing me, body and soul. Ah, yes; you do not know. I am a wicked girl—I am not fit to live."

"*Chut, chut!* You have no self-control, no dignity. Have I not told you so a hundred times?" said Mademoiselle Mathilde coldly. "Go and change your wet clothes; see what a mess you are making of everything; then I will listen to you. I have been ready enough to leave Camper this many a year. 'Tis a Godless place to live in, without society or a decent town within twenty miles of us."

"I want to live, to work, to do penitence," cried Yvonne, still speaking in a kind of delirious excitement. "It is true what I have just said, that I am a wicked girl; you do not know how true. I want to be good. Ah, yes, that is the true happiness. Is it not so, my aunt? Perhaps, if I repent, the good God will forgive me."

"You work? *Bêtise!* When have you been anything but a rough, wild girl, without a thought for anyone but yourself?"

"I can comfort the unhappy; that at least I can do. For I, too, have been unhappy; I can understand that. I do not care what I do. Only promise me that you will take me away from Camper; somewhere where I shall not have *time* to think."

"There, there! Go and change your clothes. You are talking mere folly. But as for going away, I am ready enough to listen to that suggestion when you are fit to speak about it calmly."

That night, before she went to sleep, Yvonne Hévin knelt, as

usual, at her little Prie-Dieu, gazing out of the window towards the Château de Kériadec, whence the beacon light gleamed through the darkness. And to-night, when her prayers were ended, she remained on her knees for a long time, wrapt in thought, before she spoke the old, simple benediction which for years had been her last words before she went to sleep.

Suddenly she lifted her face, with a smile on her lips, and all the passion gone from her eyes.

"*Dieu les bénissent,*" she whispered softly.

Is there much more to add? I think not.

We know that Denise had not humiliated herself in vain.

Raoul's love for her was not dead. It was locked up, tight and secure in his heart, never to escape; though years might have taken from it the freshness and delight, just as dried rose-leaves lose their colour and fragrance.

Curiously enough, in spite of the apparent shipwreck of his domestic happiness, he had always clung to a secret hope that after all things would some day be righted. He had felt it ever since his parting from Denise, when she had burst into tears, and cried out that she did not want to go to Paris now that the time had come. For one moment he had felt a dim consciousness of power over her, of a husband's superiority and strength over a frail and delicate woman.

Their love had passed through the refiner's fire, and came out thence purer, brighter, more steadfast. No longer were they divided but joined together by the most tender trust and confidence.

"*Hearts' division*" had passed into "*Hearts' love.*"



THE PACHA'S SNUFF-BOXES.

SOME half-a-dozen years previous to the sudden collapse of the Napoleonic dynasty, in 1870, a certain sensation was excited in Paris by the arrival in that city of an Oriental potentate of ambiguous nationality, but popularly known and spoken of as "The Pacha." Whether he came from Turkey or from Egypt was regarded as a matter of comparatively small importance; the two essential points in his favour were, first, that he was undoubtedly the possessor of an immense fortune; and secondly—no slight recommendation in the Lutetian capital—that he spoke French with tolerable fluency. As a matter of course, so desirable an acquisition to Parisian society became the lion of the hour; and no sooner was it ascertained that a spacious hotel overlooking the Parc de Monceaux had been engaged and furnished for the reception of his Excellency and suite, than a shoal of visitors, official and non-official, hastened to inscribe their names in a book deposited for the purpose in the porter's lodge. Every day brought a fresh instalment of signatures, until before a week had elapsed, the list threatened to rival in length the traditional catalogue of Leporello.

Hussein Pacha—an assumed title, I fancy, but the one by which he was generally known—was short and corpulent, of sallow complexion and reserved manners; he spoke little, but what he did say was concise and to the point. He was extremely observant, but chary of expressing his opinion of what he saw or heard; only one instance being recorded of a temporary departure from his habitual taciturnity. Having been persuaded by a member of the French Jockey Club to accompany him to the opera, he was escorted between the acts by his cicerone to the foyer de la danse; thereby occasioning great excitement among the ladies of the corps de ballet, many of whom doubtless anticipated that, in accordance with Eastern customs, the ceremony of throwing the handkerchief would be revived for their own especial glorification. Nothing of the sort, however, occurred. After a very cursory glance at the assembled sylphides, and a muttered ejaculation which sounded remarkably like "*Manches à balai*" (broomsticks), the visitor turned abruptly on his heel, and curtly intimated his desire to return to his box.

A few minutes later Count —— was startled by a sudden display of animation on the part of his companion, who was gazing with absorbed attention at an enormously stout lady occupying the entire front of one of the stage boxes.

"Ah, la belle femme!" enthusiastically exclaimed the Pacha. "Look, is she not superb?"

"H'm," replied the Jockey Club exquisite, hardly able to repress a

smile, "that is a matter of taste. Does not your Excellency think her perhaps on the whole a trifle too voluminous?"

"Jamais trop, monsieur!" indignantly retorted Hussein; "jamais trop!"

After a sojourn of three months in Paris, the Pacha, who had employed a considerable portion of his time in a practical study of the latest inventions and improvements, scientific and mechanical, with the view of introducing them into his own dominions, announced his intention of breaking up his establishment, and returning to the East. Before doing so, however, he was desirous of expressing his acknowledgments in the shape of a suitable present to certain officials of high standing who had been particularly serviceable to him in his researches; and consulted his secretary, an intelligent young Frenchman, on the subject.

"Monsieur Morin," he said, after explaining his project, "it seems to me that the simplest way would be to send a few thousand francs to each of them."

"Pardon me, your Highness," objected the secretary, "if I venture to remind you that a present of money would be considered a breach of etiquette, and consequently resented as an insult."

"You French are very singular people," observed the Pacha. "With us, no matter how rich a man may be, he is not fool enough to refuse piastres when he can get them. What, then, would you advise me to do?"

"May I be allowed to suggest," replied Morin, "that an object of artistic value would be a fitting token of your Highness's goodwill. A gold snuff-box, for instance."

"The very thing," said Hussein, approvingly. "Where are such articles to be found?"

"At Dorr's, in the Rue de la Paix."

"Good. Let him know exactly what I require, and see that he is here precisely at twelve to-morrow."

On being admitted into the Pacha's presence, at the appointed hour, Monsieur Dorr produced, among other specimens of his handiwork, a gold snuff-box, exquisitely finished, and encircled with moderate sized diamonds, the interior of the lid bearing the jeweller's name engraved in microscopic characters. Hussein examined it minutely, and inquired the price.

"Four thousand francs, your Highness," replied Dorr.

"I will take it, on condition that you engage to supply me with seventeen other boxes, exactly similar to this."

"Impossible, monseigneur," said the jeweller; "I have only six of this pattern in stock. Still," he added after a moment's reflection, "I might perhaps be able to manage it. May I ask how soon your Highness intends leaving Paris?"

"In a fortnight from to-day."

"That will be quite sufficient. The six snuff-boxes shall be delivered this afternoon, and they can be distributed immediately. In a few days six more will be ready, and I think I can promise the remaining half-dozen before the time fixed for your Highness's departure."

On the following day the six boxes, each accompanied by a complimentary letter, written by Morin and signed by the Pacha, were duly transmitted to the privileged individuals heading the list. Towards the end of the week, the jeweller reappeared according to promise with a second instalment of another half-dozen, which were also forwarded to their destination; and before the fortnight had expired, five more snuff-boxes were in his Highness's possession.

The Pacha expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the prompt execution of his order. "It is evident," he said, "that the recipients of my gifts are highly pleased, for I have received most flattering letters from all of them except one."

"Except one, did your Highness say?" anxiously inquired Dorr.

"Yes. My secretary informs me that one of the gentlemen at whose house my present was left is absent from Paris, which accounts for his silence, and that he is not expected back until Sunday, the day after my intended departure. But," continued the Pacha, "how is this, Monsieur Dorr? You have brought me only five boxes! Where is the sixth? It is absolutely essential that no one on my list should be neglected."

"Your Highness may rest assured that your orders will be implicitly obeyed," replied the jeweller. "If Monsieur Morin will kindly acquaint me with the name and address of the person for whom the box is destined, it shall be delivered to him on Wednesday without fail."

"Exactly similar to those, of course?"

"I can safely guarantee, monseigneur, that there will not be a shade of difference between them."

"Very good," said the Pacha; "I rely on your punctuality. My secretary will pay you the seventy-two thousand francs, and on my next visit to Paris you will probably hear from me again. Au revoir, Monsieur Dorr."

If anyone, endowed with the peculiar faculties of Asmodeus, had penetrated some ten evenings later into the small room forming the back shop and private sanctum of the well-known jeweller of the Rue de la Paix, he would have been enlightened as to certain supplementary adjuncts to the ordinary business carried on by Monsieur Dorr. He would have seen that estimable tradesman seated at a table, on which were lying six gold snuff-boxes bearing a suspicious resemblance to those recently purchased by his Highness the Pacha, and carefully polishing each in turn with a silk handkerchief.

"They all come back to me again, every one of them," muttered Monsieur Dorr, with a self-satisfied chuckle, while delicately removing

a speck of dust from the last of the half-dozen. "No one ever keeps them long, for snuff-boxes are locked-up capital, and everybody, from Napoleon downwards, knows the value of ready money. They discover my name inside the box, and naturally bring it to me; and, as I treat them liberally, I am safe to see them again. A very fair fortnight's work, I must say," he added, consulting an open account book, in which the following statement was legibly inscribed:

To sale of eighteen gold snuff-boxes at 4,000 francs each		Francs. <u>72,000</u>
Deduct from above commission to secretary ("sharp fellow that, by the way," parenthetically soliloquised Monsieur Dorr), at 50 francs per box	900	
To re-purchase of eighteen snuff-boxes from their owners at 2,000 francs each	<u>36,000</u>	<u>36,900</u>
Total net profit		<u>35,100</u>

"Not to mention," pleasantly summed up the jeweller, "that the snuff-boxes are ready for a second edition of the little game, whenever another Pacha happens to come this way."

CHARLES HERVEY.



A MÉSALLIANCE.

I HEAR sweet music, rich gowns I wear,
I live in splendour and state;
But I'd give it all to be young once more,
And steal through the old low-lintelled door,
To watch at the orchard gate.

There are flowers by thousands these ball-rooms bear,
Fair blossoms, wondrous and new;
But all the flowers that a hot-house grows
I would give for the scent of a certain rose
That a cottage garden grew!

Oh, diamonds that sparkle on bosom and hair,
Oh, rubies that glimmer and glow—
I am tired of my bargain and tired of you!
I would give you all for a daisy or two
From a little grave I know.

E. NESBIT.

ANNE DENNERY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A SECRET OF THE SEA."

IT was about ten o'clock on a certain morning in late autumn when Mr. Plimmer, one of the travelling auditors of accounts in the employ of the South-Northern Railway Company, alighted from the train at Oakroyd station. He was a tall, lean, saturnine-looking man, between thirty and forty years of age, with a hard, dry manner, a somewhat rasping voice and a thin-lipped, close-shut mouth which few people ever saw lighted up with a smile.

The duty of Mr. Plimmer and his four or five co-workers was to travel from station to station, and audit the various ledgers, returns, cash statements and other matters of account pertaining to each; and afterwards to draw up a report embodying the result of their examination, and forward the same to the chief office in London.

Oakroyd was what is commonly called a roadside station, which is equivalent to saying that it accommodated no more important centre of population than a fair-sized village and its surroundings. The station-agent was a middle-aged and refined-looking man, John Dennery by name; who, together with a youth to book passengers and attend to the telegraph instrument, and four porters, comprised the entire staff of the station.

John Dennery had been a station-master for a considerable number of years, and consequently was well acquainted with Mr. Plimmer. Having nothing to fear from the most thorough inspection of his books and cash matters, he could afford to meet the dreaded official with equanimity. All the same, he would much rather that his visit had fallen on some other day, being just then somewhat upset by certain domestic circumstances of an unpleasant kind. However, there was no help for it.

"I will be with you in three minutes," Mr. Plimmer, he said. "The down train is just signalled."

"All right, Dennery," answered the other. "Don't hurry yourself. I know where to find what I want." And with that he crossed the platform, carrying his black bag in one hand and his umbrella in the other, and made his way to John's office.

At Oakroyd, as at so many other country stations, the offices and the station-master's living-rooms were comprised under one roof. The former were two in number, one of them being the booking-office, and the other the room in which John transacted the multifarious indoor duties connected with his position. This room had three doors, one of them opening on to the platform, one connecting it with the booking-office, and a third which gave access

to the living-rooms. The upper half of this latter door was of glass, so as to light the rather dark passage on which it opened, but it might almost as well have been made wholly of wood, seeing that the glass portion of it was shaded by a red moreen curtain.

When John Dennery entered the office he found that the auditor had a couple of ledgers open on the desk before him, and was comparing and checking sundry totals therein against a sheet of figures which he had brought with him from head-quarters.

"I see that your daughter still lends you a hand now and then with your ledgers," said Mr. Plimmer. "At least, I judge the feminine writing which I find here and there to be hers."

"Yes, sir, that's Anne's writing," answered the delicate-looking station-master, whilst a vivid spot of colour flamed for a moment in each of his cheeks. "My eyes have been rather weak of late, especially by gaslight, and if it had not been for her help, I hardly know how I should have managed sometimes to get my accounts sent in to date."

John seated himself at the writing table and proceeded to open the letters and invoices which had arrived by the morning train. Mr. Plimmer, his hard-set face and keen eyes bent over the ledgers, went on with his checking. For a little while nothing was audible save an occasional rustle of paper or the monotonous scratching of a pen.

At length the auditor shut up the ledgers and turning to John, said: "And now, Mr. Dennery, if it's convenient to you, I will run through your goods-cash and floating balance before beginning on the tickets and parcels."

John rose with alacrity. He was confident that his cash would be found correct to a fraction. Having first handed the cash-book to the auditor, he proceeded to open the safe and produced therefrom a wooden bowl half-filled with money—gold, silver and copper being mixed together. The bowl contained the cash received by John on account of the conveyance of goods-traffic between the noon of the previous day, when he had made his last remittance to bank, and the time of Mr. Plimmer's examination. The cash in question would be expected to tally with the total of the sums entered in the cash-book. Five minutes sufficed to satisfy Mr. Plimmer that it did so.

Having written his initials in the cash-book, Mr. Plimmer returned the bowl and its contents to John. "And now for the floating balance," he said.

It here becomes needful to explain that what is termed the floating balance is a sum of money kept in hand in order to meet the various disbursements and liabilities which arise from day to day; the amount, of course, varying in accordance with the exigencies of each particular station. Thus, while at some places as much as a thousand pounds, or even more, is allowed, at the smallest class of stations ten pounds is deemed amply sufficient to meet all demands. At the

close of each month vouchers for all amounts which have been paid out during the preceding four weeks are forwarded to the chief office, in return for which an equivalent amount of cash is sent to the station, so as to bring the "balance" up to the total of the sum allowed.

The amount allowed John Dennergy as floating cash was forty pounds. Two days before Mr. Plimmer's visit he had received from head-quarters the sum needed to recoup him for his last month's disbursements. The total of the vouchers he had paid out in the interim came to four pounds fifteen shillings, so that, in order to make up his forty pounds, it was requisite that he should be in a position to produce in cash thirty-five pounds five.

John went to the safe for the second time and brought out in one hand a number of vouchers pinned together and in the other a canvas bag containing the money. These he placed before Mr. Plimmer, and then went quietly back to his work at the table. Silence reigned for five minutes.

At the end of that time Mr. Plimmer turned and faced John. "There seems to be something wrong here, Mr. Dennergy," he said. "Either you have not given me the whole of the vouchers, or else not sufficient cash. The two together, instead of making forty pounds, make only fifteen."

A mistake indeed! John was by his side in a moment. "The vouchers come to four pounds fifteen," he said. "I went through them myself yesterday afternoon, and the balance of thirty-five pounds five was in the bag at the same time."

"Ten pounds five is all the bag now contains. On the face of it there is a deficiency of twenty-five pounds."

Without a word more John emptied the bag and counted the contents for himself. Silver and copper together counted up to two pounds five shillings, which with eight sovereigns, the remaining contents of the bag, made up the sum specified by Mr. Plimmer.

John ran his fingers through his sparse hair, and stared at the auditor like a man distraught. Then he made a dash at the safe, and going down on one knee, he ransacked every corner of it in some faint hope of finding the missing gold. Then he rose to his feet with a great gasp, and confronted Mr. Plimmer. "It's unaccountable—altogether unaccountable," he stammered. "I balanced myself up only yesterday afternoon, and there was then thirty-three sovereigns in the bag. I counted them twice over."

"Has the key of the safe been out of your keeping in the interim?"

"Not for a moment. I never allow anyone to have access to the safe but myself."

"Then, as you say, it is altogether unaccountable," remarked Mr. Plimmer in his dryest tone. And with that he took out his official note-book and proceeded, in his slow, deliberate way, to make an entry or two therein.

John had mechanically resumed his seat. His mind was in a whirl of amazement and perplexity. Ten minutes before, had he been in the habit of laying wagers, he would willingly have wagered a thousand pounds to one that Mr. Plimmer would have found his cash right to a penny. But now——! He must be the victim of some monstrous hallucination, he told himself. Had the missing amount been spirited out of his safe by enchantment? It was certainly there yesterday, and just as certainly the key had never been out of his own keeping.

Then all at once a terrible suspicion pierced the confused maze of his thoughts like an arrow tipped with flame. He rose without a word, and left the office by way of the door which led to his own rooms. Both sitting-room and kitchen were empty. The twins were at school, and Anne had gone into the village to make some purchases. Passing through the lower rooms, John went upstairs to a certain drawer in his bedroom in which he kept the duplicate key of the safe—a second key being allowed by the company in case the first one should get lost, mislaid, or stolen.

His suspicion was confirmed. The key was not there. It had been stolen, and who could the thief be but his own son, Launce, with whom he had had such a terrible quarrel only last evening.

Yes—he saw it all now. Launce had purloined the duplicate key in the course of the evening, and, later on, when the rest of the household were in bed, he had made his way into the office, had opened the safe, had taken twenty-five sovereigns out of the bag, had re-locked the safe, and, some time in the course of the night, had quitted the house, taking the money with him. Anne had told her father at breakfast that Launce's bed had not been slept in, but John, with the scene of the evening before fresh in his mind, had expressed no surprise.

He stood staring into the empty drawer for a little space, then he turned and left the room, and went downstairs with the dazed, stony glare and automatic movements of a man walking in his sleep. When he next came back to a full consciousness of time and place he was standing in the tiny hall downstairs, and Anne was just coming in from her errands.

The moment she saw his ashen face and twitching lips, and his wide-open eyes in which, just then, shone no light of recognition, she dropped her parcels and sprang to his side.

"What is it, father?" she gasped. "Are you ill, or have you heard bad news? Come in here and tell me."

She opened the sitting-room door and drew him gently in.

At her bidding he seated himself on the little chintz-covered sofa, and Anne sat down beside him.

"What is it, father?" she asked, taking one of his nerveless hands in both hers.

Then speech came to him.

"Your brother has robbed me," he cried in the high, quavering voice of one whose emotion is overmastering him. "He has stolen twenty-five pounds belonging to the company. The auditor has discovered the loss, and I am a ruined man—ruined and disgraced!"

At the last word he broke down. Bending forward, he covered his face with his hands, and the next moment Anne saw the tears welling from between his fingers. Never had she seen her father so profoundly moved.

II.

JOHN DENNERY was a widower and the father of four children. Of these Anne, his only daughter, was twenty-two years old, while Launce was two years younger. Then, at a long interval, came the twins, Barty and Teddy, who at the time of which we write had attained the mature age of eight. Their mother had died when they were two years old, since which time Anne had taken her place as far as it lay in her power to do so. She had inherited her mother's firmness of will, and as she grew up her father had gradually fallen as completely under her mild rule—a rule which made itself felt, but never found expression in words—as he had been in years gone by under that of his wife. For John Dennergy was one of those men who feel within themselves the need—although they may be only half conscious of it—of having a stronger personality than their own to lean upon and derive support from.

Without being exactly handsome, Anne Dennergy was very pleasant to look upon. She had fine eyes and a winning smile. Hers was one of those faces in which goodness and intelligence seemed happily combined; the one you felt instinctively; the other you recognised and accepted by the time you had been a quarter of an hour in her company.

By great good fortune, Launce Dennergy at sixteen years of age had been found a position in the bank at Perrydene, a town about a dozen miles from Oakroyd. Everything had gone well with him till about a year before the date of our story, at which time reports began to reach his father of the late hours he kept, of his fondness for cards and billiards, and of the dubious company he consorted with after business hours. Heretofore he had been in the habit of spending most of his Sundays at home, running over by train on Saturday evening and returning early on Monday morning; but now he allowed a month, and sometimes longer, to elapse between his visits. His father took him sharply to task, whereupon he made liberal promises of amendment, and as no further reports reached John, the latter became once more easy in his mind. But, as it turned out afterwards, the improvement had been more apparent than real, the only change in Launce being that he now did in secret that which he had done openly before.

It was a terrible blow to John when one day the news reached him that Launce had been dismissed from his situation at the bank. There was nothing serious alleged against the young man; he was simply informed that his services would no longer be required. It was not till a week later, by which time he had spent the greater part of the salary which had been paid him on his dismissal, that he had appeared at home. Then had ensued the scene between father and son of which mention has been made.

John Dennery was mild-tempered to a degree and slow to anger; but, like most men of his calibre, when once roused his passion was apt to carry him away and to cause him to pass the limit which a stronger-minded man would have imposed on himself. Launce, who had long wished to go abroad, had begged hard for enough money to pay his passage to the New World and to find him in food and lodging for a few weeks after landing. To this request his father had answered:

"I utterly refuse to help you in any way. Now that you have disgraced yourself, it matters not to me whether you go abroad or stay in England; but in neither case need you look for money from me; nor, after to-night, will this roof be your home."

And so the two had parted in mutual anger.

If the younger man, instead of flinging out of the house in a passion as hot as his father's, had gone to his sister, and had told her all that had passed, that wise counsellor would have bidden him keep out of his father's sight for the next twenty-four hours, and leave the rest to her. Or, if John Dennery, instead of saying, "I refuse to help you," had said, "I cannot help you, because I have not the means of doing so," none of the after trouble, in all probability, would have come to pass.

When Launce Dennery preferred his request for money to take him abroad, he was under the full belief that his father had what, for a man of his income, might be deemed a very considerable amount put away. Till within a year before, Launce had often taken a sly peep at his father's bank-book, for John never thought of locking anything away from his children, and the young man had not failed to notice that as often as the monthly pay-day came round, so surely was the amount increased, though it might be only by a pound or thirty shillings at a time. Neither had he failed to remember that on the last occasion when he peeped into the book the amount standing to his father's credit was something over a hundred and thirty pounds. Thus, in asking for help to carry him abroad, he had felt that he was asking for no more than his father was in a position to grant, if only it should please him to do so.

But what neither he nor Anne knew, or suspected, was that of the hundred and thirty pounds which had stood in their father's name a year before, not one farthing was now left. The fact was that John Dennery, like many thousands of other small capitalists, had been

allured by one of those specious advertisements with which the newspapers abound from day to day into investing the whole of his savings in the stock of a certain bogus company, which professed to guarantee its shareholders twelve per cent. to begin with, and held out the additional bait of a prospective bonus at the close of each year. One dividend John did receive; but a month or two later the company collapsed, and as far as the shareholders were concerned, nothing was saved from the wreck. It was a heavy blow, but John kept his own counsel, and breathed no word of his loss to anyone. It was the first time that he had had a secret from his daughter.

III.

HER father's announcement was a shock to Anne Dennergy such as in the whole of her young life she had never experienced before. Her brother Launce, whom she had never ceased to love in spite of his faults, a—— But no, she could not speak the hateful word, even to herself! And then the ruin and disgrace which her father had said must surely follow! It seemed like some horrible nightmare or ghastly phantasmal dream. But there were her father's tears, and the sobs he could not repress, to lend a terrible emphasis to his words. Presently, her arm stole round his waist, and she drew his head down till it rested on her shoulder, where her warm, soft cheek nestled against it, which, of itself, was infinitely soothing to the stricken man. She felt that he would be calmer and better for having given inarticulate vent to his feelings, and for some minutes neither of them spoke.

At length Anne said: "What makes you think, father, that it was Launce who took the money?"

John had grown calmer by this time. "Because no one but he had the means of obtaining access to the safe. The duplicate key which I kept upstairs is missing." And with that he went on to tell her what we know already.

With a little shiver at her heart, Anne called to mind the fact that she had heard her brother's footsteps descending the stairs sometime in the middle of the night, but had been too sleepy to do more than vaguely wonder what he could be doing out of bed at that untimely hour.

Presently she said: "What will the auditor do now that he has discovered the loss?"

"His first step will be to report the affair to the head office. Tomorrow, or next day, will come an order for my suspension. A few days later I shall be summarily dismissed the service—dismissed, too, without a character, which, at my time of life, means nothing less than utter ruin."

"Supposing you were to explain by what means the money is missing?" said Anne, tentatively.

"The first effect of that would be to cause the detectives to be put on your brother's track; and the result, if he were taken, which in all likelihood he would be, a sentence of penal servitude."

A little cry of dismay broke from Anne.

"No; vile and unprincipled as your brother may be, I cannot do that," continued John. "How could I bear to meet his mother in the next world with that on my conscience? He is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone, and I must take on myself the burden of his guilt."

"But, father, why not make up the deficiency before the auditor sends in his report? You have been saving up for years—you have more than once told me so—and there must surely be more than enough in the bank to cover the sum taken by Launce."

A deep flush overspread John Dennergy's features as he falteringly and hesitatingly told the story of his loss. Ah, how bitter a confession it was for a father to have to make to his child!

After sitting awhile in silence, Anne rose. The twins would be home from school presently, and no preparations for dinner had yet been made. "Father," she said, as she stooped and kissed him, "don't let us give up hope. All may yet be well. This may be sent us for a trial, and——"

"If anyone else than Launce had taken the money," broke in John; "anyone else than he!"

John Dennergy went back to the office, where he found Mr. Plimmer still busy at work. John had been away about half an hour.

"Well, Mr. Dennergy, and what have you succeeded in making out about the twenty-five pounds?" asked the auditor in his dry, precise voice.

"Nothing, sir, nothing," answered John, with a dejected shake of the head. "All I can say is that the money was there yesterday afternoon, and that it's not there now."

"Also that you are not in a position to account for its disappearance?"

"Also that I am not in a position to account for its disappearance."

Mr. Plimmer pursed up his lips, but no sound came from them. Then, without further comment, he resumed his work.

The day wore on. There was nothing much doing at the station during the afternoon, so about two o'clock John took his hat and stick and went for a solitary walk in the meadows. His head ached and his heart was inconceivably sore. Indoors he felt stifled. Solitude and the open air would do something towards reviving him. It was about half-past two when Anne, excited by a feeling of curiosity which she could not have explained, went softly along the passage which divided the house part from the office, and applied her eye to a tiny hole in the curtain which shaded the upper half of the door. This hole,

which her father was quite cognisant of, Anne used for ascertaining whether her father was engaged with anyone, thereby saving her from intruding upon him except when he was alone. Looking through it now, she had a full view of Mr. Plimmer, who was standing with his back towards her, busily writing.

Presently he brought his task to an end, and then, while the few last lines he had written were drying, he made ready to take a press copy of the document. Could it be the report, Anne asked herself, of which her father had made mention?

As soon as Mr. Plimmer had taken the press copy, he proceeded to tear it out of the book, and then hung the wet sheet over a gaspipe to dry; after that he enclosed the original in an envelope which he had previously addressed. Taking the envelope and its enclosure between his thumb and finger he then left the office by the door which opened on the platform.

The moment he was gone Anne entered. Through the wire blind of the side window she could see Mr. Plimmer walking up the platform towards Mark Izod, the foreman porter, who was standing at the far end talking to a stranger. It was the work of a few seconds for Anne to snatch the copy off the gaspipe, and read what was impressed thereon. The communication was addressed to one of the leading officials of the line, and ran as under:—

"DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to have to inform you that my investigation at this station has brought to light a deficiency of twenty-five pounds in the floating balance, which Dennery, the agent, is either unable, or unwilling, to account for. My audit is not yet completed, but, as far as I have gone, the rest of the accounts and cash matters appear to be correct. I presume that you will at once send someone to take over the charge of the station. Meanwhile, I await instructions. Yours respectfully,

"W. B. PLIMMER."

When the auditor came back, three minutes later, the office was empty and the press copy, to all appearance, exactly as he had left it, except that it was now dry. He folded it up and put it with his other papers in his black bag, which he proceeded to lock. Leaving the bag where it was, he went out and accosted Mark Izod for the second time. "I'm going into the village," he said. "Should Mr. Dennery inquire for me, tell him I shall be back in about an hour." With that he went.

Scarcely was he clear of the station before Anne came out of the house and went up to Mark.

"Did Mr. Plimmer leave any message for my father?" she asked.

Mark told her the message. Then she said: "What was it he wanted to see you about the first time?"

"He gave me this letter," answered Mark as he extracted the document from his jacket pocket, "and told me to be sure to give it

to the guard of the 3.20 up—and I'm due off duty for my three hours' rest twenty minutes before that time," added the foreman-porter with an aggrieved air.

"If you like to entrust me with the letter, I will see that it is forwarded," said Anne, her heart beginning to beat painfully.

"Thank you, miss. I should be glad if you would." And with that he handed her the letter.

She put the fatal missive in her pocket and went back indoors. Presently her father came in from his walk. His nerves had in some measure recovered their tone, but his features had a strained and worn expression which was new to them, and there was a look in his eyes which made his daughter's heart ache.

Anne gave him Mr. Plimmer's message, and then she said: "Father, if the money could be made up before the auditor's report reached the head-office, would it not save you from being suspended?"

"If—my dear—if. Where's the use of talking in that way? The money cannot be made up."

"But just to assume for a moment that it could."

"In that case I don't know what might be the result. Nothing more than a reprimand, perhaps. Of course the one great thing is to make up the money—that done, I could pull through everything else. But, as I said before, where's the use of talking?" He sighed deeply and went away into the office.

Anne sat for a long time without stirring, one hand clasped tightly in the other. Her lips were hard-set and for the time every atom of colour had died out of her face. Was there no way of saving her father?

Then she answered her own question by telling herself that there was one way, and one only, by which it could be done. It would cut her to the quick, it would humiliate her as she had never been humiliated before, to have to do it; but not to do it meant more, far more, than any suffering which the doing of it might subject her to. Should the worst come, for herself she should fear nothing. She knew that she could always earn her living, if not in one way, then in another; but she knew equally well that she could never earn enough money to keep her father and the two children in however humble a way. Her father was too advanced in life and knew too little of anything outside the sphere of railway work to allow of his even hoping to obtain another situation, besides which there would be the indelible stain on his character. No home other than the workhouse stared them in the face, and she knew full well what that meant. For her father it meant a broken heart. It would kill him as surely as if he had been the victim of some fatal accident.

"It must be done. There is no other way—none," said Anne at length, with a sob in her voice, as she rose and went about her household duties, the light of a great resolution shining in her eyes.

The 3.20 up-train came and went in due course, but did not take Mr. Plimmer's report with it.

When five o'clock came, Mr. Plimmer put away his books and papers. Turning to John, he said: "I shall sleep at Perrydene to-night, and be back here soon after nine to-morrow. By that time, Mr. Dennergy, you may perhaps be in a position to explain what has become of the missing cash."

John shook his head. "I am sadly afraid, sir, that I shall not be able to give you any more information in the morning than I have given you already."

"It is an unfortunate affair—most unfortunate," answered the auditor. "That is my train, I believe, just coming in."

John went about during the rest of the evening like a man in a dream. He found it impossible to settle down to any of his ordinary work in the office. He attended to his duties on the platform, seeing the trains in and out, almost as though he were an automaton, going through a pre-arranged series of movements. Over everything there rested an air of unreality. He found it impossible to realise in thought that a few days hence the station he loved so well, where his two little boys had been born, and where his wife had died, would, in all likelihood, know him no more—that in fact he might no longer have a roof to call his own. How would he be able to bear it when the time came?—how live through it all?

When it was dark Anne put on her hat and jacket, and merely telling her father that she had an errand in the village, she went out and shut the door softly behind her. Her heart was sore within her. Never in her life had such a task been set her as that which confronted her to-night. She walked quickly, looking neither to right nor left, seeing no one, going over and over again that inward struggle which never ended but to begin afresh. Every minute or two her set lips moved, and anyone who could have listened might have heard her heart say the same words not once, but many times: "There is no other way—there is no other way!"

She went right through the village till she reached a new red brick house at the further end, which stood a little way back in its own grounds, and was evidently the abode of someone tolerably well-to-do. Passing through the shrubbery, Anne went up to the front door and rang the bell. "Is Mr. Cleghorn at home?" she asked of the servant who responded to the summons. Having received an answer in the affirmative, she said: "Will you please tell him that Anne Dennergy is here, and wishes to speak to him."

Two minutes later she was shown into the room which Mr. Cleghorn designated his study. Half an hour later she left the house, carrying a tiny parcel tightly clutched in one hand.

There was a short way home through the fields, and she turned in by the stile which led to it. At that hour it was as lonely as a road could be; but Anne had no fears; utter solitude was what her heart

was crying out for. She sped along the narrow path which was faintly outlined in the starlight, a strange confluence of emotions at work within her, which alternately swayed her this way and that. At one moment a sort of pathetic gladness held possession of her. Her father was saved, their home would not be taken from them, on the morrow the black cloud which had threatened to engulf them would vanish into thin air. A few moments later a shudder would go through her from head to foot when she called to mind the price at which she had bought all this. How hard and cruel life seemed! a terrible enigma of which death alone held the key.

When about half-way home she came to another stile, at which she stopped to rest for a minute or two, but scarcely had she come to a halt when her over-burdened heart gave way. There, in the darkness and solitude, with the soft whispers of the night wind coming and going about her, she wept unrestrainedly till there were no more tears to shed. As she went on her way again she blessed the darkness, which covers up so much that all of us would fain keep hidden.

On reaching home she let herself in, and went at once to her room. Then, having bathed her eyes and smoothed her hair, she took the tiny parcel in her hand and went down to her father. He was seated in his usual corner by the fire, in a dejected attitude, his pipe, which he had allowed to go out before it was half-smoked, held loosely in one hand. He took not the slightest notice when Anne entered the room; she could not tell whether he was conscious of her presence or not. Going behind him, she laid one hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"Father," she said, speaking with a little catch in her voice, "there is the money: twenty-five sovereigns, which a friend has been kind enough to lend us. You will be able to give them to the auditor in the morning, and—and now that the money is made up, of course everything will come right, and we shall have nothing more to fear."

John Dennergy stood up, staring at the little packet of gold which Anne had placed in his hand, and then letting his gaze travel to his daughter's face. His lips moved, but no sound came from them.

IV.

It was a certain Mr. Silas Cleghorn from whom Anne Dennergy had borrowed the twenty-five pounds.

Mr. Cleghorn was about forty years old, and was a builder in a large way of business. His office and works were at Perrydene, to and from which place he went most days, either by railway or gig. By a combination of energy and shrewdness, he had worked his way up from the position of bricklayer's assistant, till now, those who knew most of his affairs averred that he could not be worth less

than twenty thousand pounds. He was not a hard-hearted man by any means, but in all his dealings through his life he had been in the habit of getting full value for his money, and as much more as he possibly could. He was not at all averse from doing a kind action, especially if it were one which showed well in the eyes of the world, but he looked for an equivalent of some kind in return. If one of those to whom he had done a kindness could show his gratitude in no other way, the least he could do was to blow Mr. Cleghorn's trumpet with might and main. If there was one thing he disliked more than another, it was having to hide his light under a bushel.

Such was the man who, on stepping out of the train one day at Oakroyd station, slipped, fell, and twisted his ankle. He was carried into the station-master's rooms, and upwards of a week elapsed before he could be removed to his own house, during which time he was waited on by Anne Dennergy. He had long since persuaded himself that it was time to think of taking a wife, and he had not failed mentally to appraise sundry spinsters and widows of his acquaintance, all of them more or less well dowered, without, however, being able to decide which of them he should honour by asking her to become Mrs. Cleghorn, and by graciously consenting to consolidate her fortune with his own. But he had not been laid up more than three days before he had made up his mind, not without a sharp wrench to his pride, to ask the station-master's penniless daughter to become his wife. As his eyes followed her about admiringly he would murmur to himself: "That's the young woman for my money! She shall be Mrs. C. before she's three months older."

Not often in his life had Silas Cleghorn been balked of anything he had set his heart on, but he was in this instance. It is enough to say that he proposed and was rejected, somewhat, it may be, to John Dennergy's secret disappointment, who would dearly have liked to see his daughter mistress of the Mallows, with her own carriage to drive out in and her own servants to give her orders to. All things considered, Mr. Cleghorn took his rejection in very good part. "Young girls don't always know their own minds," he said, with a short, hard laugh, and a lowering of his heavy brows. "I shan't take your answer as final, Miss Anne. I'll try my luck again in three months' time."

"It won't be any use, Mr. Cleghorn—indeed it won't," Anne had responded.

"I'm none so sure of that. At any rate, I'll wait and see."

The three months of which he had spoken had not yet come to an end.

And it was to this man that Anne had gone to seek the help she knew he was so well able to afford, if only he were so minded, and which she knew not where else to look for. Of the interview between the two it is not needful that we should speak in detail.

Mr. Cleghorn saw his opportunity, and he did not fail to seize it. He would not have been the man he was had he omitted to do so. He agreed to advance the money on one condition, and on one only. If, at the expiration of two months, the sum were not repaid, Anne Dennery was to become his promised wife. There was no other possibility of saving her father. Disgrace—ruin—the workhouse: her vivid imagination bodied forth the whole direful sequence. She seemed to feel the clinging arms of Barty and Teddy round her neck, and their warm kisses on her cheek. Could she ever forgive herself should any harm happen to them? There had been a few moments of silent, bitter communing; then turning to Mr. Cleghorn, her eyes charged with a pathos more expressive than words, she had simply said:

"I agree to your terms."

It was only a week ago that Harry Inglis had asked her to be his wife, and if she had not said Yes, neither had she said No. It was only the thought of her father and the twins, and the duty she owed to them, which had kept back the word she would fain have spoken, for she loved Harry better than he knew. But now her little romance, of which the first pages had seemed so sweet, was shut for ever, and her heart cried out in anguish that it should be so.

Anne had still the intercepted report in her keeping, and through all her more personal troubles, her conscience kept pricking her with doubts as to how far she was justified by the circumstances of the case in acting as she had. So overpowering did these doubts at length become, that she went down to the platform when the first up-train was due, soon after six o'clock in the morning, and herself gave Mr. Plimmer's report into charge of the guard.

That official arrived in due course shortly after nine o'clock. "Ah, Mr. Dennery, I see that you have good news for me," he said the moment he set eyes on John.

"Yes, sir; the best of news. The money has been found, I'm thankful to say. Here it is in the safe, sir, if you'll be good enough to verify the fact."

"It is no part of my duty to ask you how you have come by the money—whether you had mislaid it for the time being, or whether it was lost in reality—it is sufficient for me to satisfy myself that it is there. But it is a pity, a very great pity, that it was not forthcoming before I sent in my report. However, Dennery, you may rely upon my doing my best to smooth matters over for you."

He spoke in a more sympathetic tone than the other had believed him capable of. John looked at him with grateful surprise.

Mr. Plimmer went at once into the next office, where was the telegraph instrument, and himself despatched the following message to the official to whom his report had been addressed:

"See my report of yesterday. Cash forthcoming this morning. Wire instructions."

In the course of half an hour came the following reply :
"No report to hand re Oakroyd station. At a loss to know your meaning. Return by first train and explain."

Mr. Plimmer, in great perturbation, went in search of Mark Izod, but the foreman-porter happened to have gone into the village to collect an account, and as the next up-train was presently due, he was compelled to bottle up his indignation and take it away with him. A quarter of an hour later he was gone, but not without having scattered a few crumbs of comfort before he went. He would do all that in him lay for an old servant like Dennery, he said, whom heretofore he had found so straightforward and correct in all matters affecting the Company.

It was on Wednesday evening that Anne Dennery went to the Mallows to see Mr. Cleghorn, and it was on the following Friday night, between eleven and twelve, that she was roused from one of her sorrowful reveries by the noise of something thrown against her bedroom window. Her candle had been extinguished some time, and naturally she was a little startled; but she rose at once, opened the casement, and looked out. Then she saw someone below, in the starlight, whom for the moment she failed to recognise.

"Don't be alarmed; it is I—Launce," said a voice, in semi-tones.
"Open the door for me, but on no account let my father know I'm here till I've had a talk with you."

Anne hurried on a few clothes and admitted her brother. She was so moved by what he had to tell her, that, late as the hour was, she insisted on calling her father.

What Launce had to tell was to the following purport:

He admitted at once that it was he who had taken the twenty-five pounds, and that he had obtained access to the safe by means of the duplicate key. But when he took it he felt fully confident in his own mind that the loss of it would cause no serious inconvenience, believing, as he did, that his father had close upon a hundred and fifty pounds put away in the bank. His intention had been to go out to the Diamond Fields where, like five out of every six young men who go there, he hoped before long to make his fortune and to be able to recoup his father twenty times over the amount he had now taken. On his way to the port from which he had intended to sail, the train in which he was travelling had come into collision with another train, the lamentable consequences being that several people were killed, among others being two in the same compartment with Launce. Strange to say, he had escaped with nothing more serious than a severe shaking and a few bruises. So overcome, however, was he with the dreadful scenes of which he was perforce a spectator, and so impressed was he with the providential nature of his escape, that the moment he could get away he had turned his face homeward, intent only on restoring the money and begging his father's forgiveness. Of the twenty-five pounds taken by him he had brought back

twenty-three, the remainder having been disbursed for fares and expenses.

Over the thankfulness of John Dennerly we will not linger—thankfulness not merely for the restoration of the money, but in that his son had been taught a lesson he was not likely to forget as long as he lived; for it is almost needless to add that Launce was thoroughly shocked when he learnt how nearly his reckless act, to call it by no harsher term, had proved the ruin of his father.

Anne Dennerly's heart was chanting a pæan of joy when in the golden autumnal light of the following evening she took the path through the fields on her way to the Mallows to repay Mr. Cleghorn his twenty-five pounds. It had grown dark by the time she set out on her return. By the strangest chance in the world, when she reached the first stile, who should be leaning over it but Harry Inglis. Of course he could do no other than offer to see her through the meadows. As to what passed between them on the way the present deponent has no authentic knowledge; all he can vouch for is that when at length Anne reached home her brother stared at her in surprise.

"Why, Nance, what ever's the matter with you," he exclaimed. "I never saw you with such a colour before."

John Dennerly was summoned to attend at the manager's office on the following Tuesday, and there asked to explain how it happened that he was not in a position to produce his cash balance in full when called upon by Mr. Plimmer to do so. Then John, knowing the man he had to deal with, made a frank confession of all the circumstances of the case.

"You can go back to your station as soon as you like, Dennerly," said the manager good-humouredly when John had brought his narrative to an end. "I think it is scarcely necessary for me to impress upon you the need for taking better care of your duplicate key in time to come."

Launce, in the course of a month or two, found another situation, since which time, as he says of himself, he has "turned over a fresh leaf." Nor does there seem any present likelihood that, except in memory, he will ever turn back to that blotted page, from which, for his ultimate good as it proved, he was compelled to learn so severe a lesson.

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